It so happened...

Supplementary Reader in English for Class VIII

0850

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NATIONAL COUNCIL OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND TRAINING

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OFFICES OF THE PUBLICATION DIVISION, NCERT

NCERT Campus
Sri Aurobindo Marg
New Delhi 110 016 **Phone : 011-26562708**

108, 100 Feet Road
Hosdakere Halli Extension
Banashankari III Stage
Bengaluru 560 085 **Phone : 080-26725740**

Navjivan Trust Building
P.O.Navjivan
Ahmedabad 380 014 **Phone : 079-27541446**

CWC Campus
Opp. Dhankal Bus Stop
Panihati
Kolkata 700 114 **Phone : 033-25530454**

CWC Complex
Maligaon
Guwahati 781 021 **Phone : 0361-2674869**

Publication Team

Head, Publication Division	: *Anup Kumar Rajput*
Chief Editor	: *Shveta Uppal*
Chief Production Officer	: *Arun Chitkara*
Chief Business Manager (In charge)	: *Amitabh Kumar*
Editor	: *Vijayam Sankaranarayanan*
Production Officer	: *Atul Saxena*

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Blue Fish

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Foreword

THE National Curriculum Framework (NCF), 2005, recommends that children's life at school must be linked to their life outside the school. This principle marks a departure from the legacy of bookish learning which continues to shape our system and causes a gap between the school, home and community. The syllabi and textbooks developed on the basis of NCF signify an attempt to implement this basic idea. They also attempt to discourage rote learning and the maintenance of sharp boundaries between different subject areas. We hope these measures will take us significantly further in the direction of a child-centred system of education outlined in the National Policy of Education (1986).

The success of this effort depends on the steps that school principals and teachers will take to encourage children to reflect on their own learning and to pursue imaginative activities and questions. We must recognise that, given space, time and freedom, children generate new knowledge by engaging with the information passed on to them by adults. Treating the prescribed textbook as the sole basis of examination is one of the key reasons why other resources and sites of learning are ignored. Inculcating creativity and initiative is possible if we perceive and treat children as participants in learning, not as receivers of a fixed body of knowledge.

These aims imply considerable change in school routines and mode of functioning. Flexibility in the daily time-table is as necessary as rigour in implementing the annual calendar so that the required number of teaching days are actually devoted to teaching. The methods used for teaching and evaluation will also determine how effective this supplementary reader proves for making children's life at school a happy experience rather than a source of stress or boredom. Syllabus designers have tried to address the problem of curricular burden by restructuring and reorienting knowledge at different stages with greater consideration for child psychology and the time available for teaching. The book attempts to enhance this endeavour by giving higher priority and space to opportunities

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for contemplation and wondering, discussion in small groups, and activities requiring hands-on experience.

The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) appreciates the hard work done by the textbook development committee responsible for this book. We wish to thank the Chairperson of the advisory group in languages, Professor Namwar Singh, and the Chief Advisor for this book, Professor R. Amritavalli for guiding the work of this committee. Several teachers contributed to the development of this book; we are grateful to their principals for making this possible. We are indebted to the institutions and organisations which have generously permitted us to draw upon their resources, materials and personnel. We are especially grateful to the members of the National Monitoring Committee, appointed by the Department of Secondary and Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development under the Chairpersonship of Professor Mrinal Miri and Professor G.P. Deshpande for their valuable time and contribution. As an organisation committed to systemic reform and continuous improvement in the quality of its products, NCERT welcomes comments and suggestions which will enable us to undertake further revision and refinements.

Director
National Council of Educational
Research and Training

New Delhi
30 November 2007

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Rationalisation of Content in the Textbooks

In view of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is imperative to reduce content load on students. The National Education Policy 2020, also emphasises reducing the content load and providing opportunities for experiential learning with creative mindset. In this background, the NCERT has undertaken the exercise to rationalise the textbooks across all classes. Learning Outcomes already developed by the NCERT across classes have been taken into consideration in this exercise.

Contents of the textbooks have been rationalised in view of the following:

- Content based on genres of literature in the textbooks and supplementary readers at different stages of school education
- Content that is meant for achieving Learning Outcomes for developing language proficiency and is accessible at different stages
- For reducing the curriculum load and examination stress in view of the previling condition of the Pandemic
- Content, which is easily accessible to students without much interventions from teachers and can be learned by children through self-learning or peer-learning
- Content, which is irrelevant in the present context

This present edition, is a reformatted version after carrying out the changes given above.

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A Note for the Teacher

THE main objective of this supplementary reader is to promote among learners the habit of reading independently with interest, understanding and enjoyment. It seeks to enable them to read independently in the sense that they would not expect the book to be taken up page by page in the classroom. They would rather read it on their own and later share and confirm their responses and appreciation with the teacher and the peer group through discussions, questions and, wherever possible, even role-play.

The book contains eleven pieces. Each piece has been divided into two or three manageable sections, each section briefly summarised in point form without revealing crucial turns and twists of the storyline, thus sustaining readers' curiosity and interest. While-reading 'Comprehension Check,' given at the end of sections, is a recall of what has been read and understood so far.

This format is being tried to make comprehension easier and concentration keener. Each piece is also followed by a set of questions as aids to understanding and, at many places, topics for discussion in groups. Points under 'Think it Over' are largely such quotations as have a direct bearing on the theme of the story. Some quotations may not be immediately comprehensible to learners. Teachers may therefore want to play a direct role in explaining, simplifying or paraphrasing lines/topics and suggest appropriate sub-topics to facilitate a focussed discussion in small groups. All questions should be attempted orally before well-formulated answers are put down on paper. Discussion on related topics should be encouraged so that learners get an opportunity to go beyond the book and feel inspired to reach hitherto undiscovered vistas of knowledge and pleasure.

The stories, amply illustrated, deal with themes of cooperation, compassion, respect and love for flora and fauna, sound decision-making, science fiction, education, peace and harmony. It is hoped that young readers will find the book enjoyable and rewarding, and will feel motivated to read extensively on their own to become proficient readers in the years to come.

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THE CONSTITUTION OF INDIA

PREAMBLE

WE, THE PEOPLE OF INDIA, having solemnly resolved to constitute India into a [1]**[SOVEREIGN SOCIALIST SECULAR DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC]** and to secure to all its citizens :

JUSTICE, social, economic and political;

LIBERTY of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship;

EQUALITY of status and of opportunity; and to promote among them all

FRATERNITY assuring the dignity of the individual and the [2][unity and integrity of the Nation];

IN OUR CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY this twenty-sixth day of November, 1949 do **HEREBY ADOPT, ENACT AND GIVE TO OURSELVES THIS CONSTITUTION.**

---

1. Subs. by the Constitution (Forty-second Amendment) Act, 1976, Sec.2, for "Sovereign Democratic Republic" (w.e.f. 3.1.1977)
2. Subs. by the Constitution (Forty-second Amendment) Act, 1976, Sec.2, for "Unity of the Nation" (w.e.f. 3.1.1977)

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Textbook Development Committee

Chairperson, Advisory Group in Languages
Professor Namwar Singh, formerly *Chairman*, School of Languages, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi

Chief Advisor
R. Amritavalli, *Professor*, The English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad

Chief Coordinator
Ram Janma Sharma, *Professor* and *Head*, Department of Languages, NCERT, New Delhi

Members
Beena Sugathan, *PGT* (English), Loreto Convent, Delhi Cantonment, New Delhi

Madhavi Gayathri Raman, *Lecturer,* The English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad

Rooma Palit, *PGT* (English), Delhi Public School, Nalconagar, Angul, Odisha

Shyamala Kumaradas (formerly of CIEFL, Hyderabad), 3C Sheetal Haven, Peringavu, Trichur

Member–Coordinator
Nasiruddin Khan, *Reader* in English, Department of Languages, NCERT, New Delhi

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Every effort has been made to trace all copyright holders. We apologise for some omissions, and will gratefully acknowledge them as soon as they can be traced.

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CONSTITUTION OF INDIA

Part IV A (Article 51 A)

Fundamental Duties

It shall be the duty of every citizen of India —

(a) to abide by the Constitution and respect its ideals and institutions, the National Flag and the National Anthem;

(b) to cherish and follow the noble ideals which inspired our national struggle for freedom;

(c) to uphold and protect the sovereignty, unity and integrity of India;

(d) to defend the country and render national service when called upon to do so;

(e) to promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India transcending religious, linguistic and regional or sectional diversities; to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women;

(f) to value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture;

(g) to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, rivers, wildlife and to have compassion for living creatures;

(h) to develop the scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform;

(i) to safeguard public property and to abjure violence;

(j) to strive towards excellence in all spheres of individual and collective activity so that the nation constantly rises to higher levels of endeavour and achievement;

*(k) who is a parent or guardian, to provide opportunities for education to his child or, as the case may be, ward between the age of six and fourteen years.

Note: The Article 51A containing Fundamental Duties was inserted by the Constitution (42nd Amendment) Act, 1976 (with effect from 3 January 1977).

*(k) was inserted by the Constitution (86th Amendment) Act, 2002 (with effect from 1 April 2010).

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0850CH01

1 How the Camel got his hump

I

- The world had just begun, and the animals were working for humans.
- There was one lazy animal that did nothing, and said nothing but 'Humph'.
- Even the clever Djinn was at his wit's end.

In the beginning, when the world was new and the Animals were just beginning to work for Man, there was a Camel, and he lived in the middle of a Howling Desert because he did not want to work. He ate sticks and thorns and prickles, and when anybody spoke to him he said "Humph!" Just "Humph!" and no more.

Presently the Horse came to him on Monday morning, with a saddle on his back and said, "Camel, O Camel, come out and trot like the rest of us."

"Humph!" said the Camel, and the Horse went away and told the Man.

Presently the Dog came to him, with a stick in his mouth, and said,

Djinn: (*pronounced 'jin' and variously spelt as 'genie', 'genii', 'jinnee', 'djinni', 'djinny'*): a spirit that has strange powers and can assume any form, human or animal

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"Camel, O Camel, come and fetch and carry like the rest of us."

"Humph!" said the Camel, and the Dog went away and told the Man.

Presently the Ox came to him, with the yoke on his neck, and said, "Camel, O Camel, come and plough like the rest of us."

"Humph!" said the Camel, and the Ox went away and told the Man.

At the end of the day the Man called the Horse and the Dog and the Ox together, and said, "Three, O Three, I'm very sorry for you;

but that Humph-thing in the Desert can't work, or he would have been here by now, so I am going to leave him alone, and you must work double-time to make up for it."

That made the Three very angry, and they held a panchayat on the edge of the Desert; and the Camel came chewing cud and laughed at them. Then he said "Humph!" and went away again.

Presently there came along the Djinn who was in charge of All Deserts, rolling in a cloud of dust.

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"Djinn of All Deserts," said the Horse, "is it right for anyone to be idle?"

"Certainly not," said the Djinn.

"Well," said the Horse, "there's a thing in the middle of your Desert with a long neck and long legs, and he hasn't done a stroke of work since Monday morning. He won't trot."

"Whew!" said the Djinn whistling, "that's my Camel. What does he say about it?"

"He says 'Humph!', and he won't plough," said the Ox.

"Very good," said the Djinn. "I'll humph him if you will kindly wait a minute."

Comprehension Check

1. *What tasks, do you think, were assigned to the dog and the ox?*
2. *Why did the camel live in the middle of the desert?*
3. *What made the dog, the horse and the ox very angry?*
4. *How did the Djinn know the horse was complaining against the camel?*

I'll humph him: I'll deal with him appropriately./I'll set him right.

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II

- The Djinn remonstrated with the camel, who said "Humph".
- The camel's beautiful back suddenly grew a lump, which was the camel's hump.
- The Djinn assured the camel his hump would always be a help, not a hindrance.

The Djinn rolled himself up in his dust-cloak, and took a walk across the Desert, and found the Camel looking at his own reflection in a pool of water.

"My friend," said the Djinn, "what's this I hear of your doing no work?"

The Djinn sat down, with his chin in his hand, while the Camel looked at his own reflection in the pool of water.

"You've given the Three extra work ever since Monday morning, all on account of your idleness," said the Djinn. And he went on thinking with his chin in his hand.

remonstrated: protested/complained

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"Humph!" said the Camel.

"I shouldn't say that again if I were you," said the Djinn; "you might say it once too often. I want you to work."

And the Camel said "Humph!" again; but no sooner had he said it than he saw his back, that he was so proud of, puffing up and puffing up into a great big hump.

"Do you see that?" said the Djinn. "That's your very own humph that you've brought upon your very own self by not working. Today is Thursday, and you've done no work since Monday, when the work began. Now you are going to work."

"How can I," said the Camel, "with this humph on my back?"

"That has a purpose," said the Djinn, "all because you missed those three days. You will be able to work now for three days without eating, because you can live on your humph; and don't you ever say I never did anything for you. Come out of the Desert and go to the Three, and behave."

And the Camel went away to join the Three. And from that day to this the Camel always wears a humph (we call it 'hump' now, not to hurt his feelings); but he has never yet caught up with the three days that he missed at the beginning of the world, and he has never yet learned how to behave.

RUDYARD KIPLING
(abridged)

Comprehension Check

1. *The camel was looking at this own reflection in the pool. What does it suggest to you about the camel?*
2. *The camel said, "Humph" repeatedly. How did it affect him?*
3. *What, according to the Djinn, was the use of the "humph"?*
4. *"...he has never yet learnt to behave". In the light of this, what is the writer's opinion about the camel?*

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Exercise

Discuss the following topics in groups.

1. Can this story be factually true?
2. What, according to you, is the story about? Consider the following:
   (i) How the world began.
   (ii) Why everyone should do his/her share of work seriously.
   (iii) How animals are important to humans.
   (iv) How the camel got his hump.
3. What did you do over the weekend? Were you generally active or idle? Please check your back before starting to discuss or answer the question.
4. There are broadly two categories of workers — those who prefer to do today what they can do tomorrow, and those who prefer to do tomorrow what they can do today. Where do you belong?

Think it Over

- All work is dignified: there is no such thing as 'menial work'.
- He who struggles is better than he who never attempts.
- 'All work and no play…' Is it a good idea? William Faulkner, American novelist and poet, didn't think so. In his words, "One of the saddest things is that the only thing that a man can do for eight hours a day, day after day, is work. You can't eat eight hours a day… All you can do for eight hours is work. Which is the reason why man makes himself and everybody else so miserable and unhappy".

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0850CH02

2 Children at work

Before you read

There are many reasons why children have to work. Some help their family make a livelihood. Others, who run away from unhappy homes, need to support themselves. Children who have to work can't go to school and play like other children of their age.

I

- Velu, an eleven-year old boy, runs away from home.
- He wanders around for hours before getting on a train to Chennai without a ticket.
- Tired and hungry, he doesn't know where to go when a stranger at the station shouts a word of welcome.

WHEN the Kanyakumari Express pulled in at Chennai Central, it took Velu some time to get off. When he finally stood on the platform, his legs felt wobbly, as if he was still on a moving train.

"Oy, out of the way!" A porter went by with a loaded trolley. Velu jumped aside.

He sat on a bench on the platform, putting his small bundle down. In all his eleven years, he had never seen so many people, except once a year at the fair in his village. People walked by, bumping into him with their suitcases. A voice announced something on a loudspeaker. Near him a group of people sat on

pulled in: arrived **wobbly**: unsteady

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their luggage, looking at a TV hanging from the roof. The noise was terrible.

Velu put his head down on his knees, feeling miserable and exhausted. He had run away from his village two days ago. For two days he had eaten nothing but some peanuts and a piece of jaggery. In his bundle he carried a shirt, a towel and a comb.

He had walked for most of the first day to Kanur and then got on the train to Chennai. Velu had no money for a ticket but luckily the ticket collector didn't come to the unreserved compartment. He had tried to sleep on the floor near the door. A group of men next to him had played cards and shouted all night.

"*Aiy*! What, new to town eh?" called out a rough voice.

Velu opened his eyes. There were a lot of people standing around, but nobody was looking at him.

"Here! *Aiy*!"

He turned around. Behind him was a girl around his own age, wearing a long *banian* that came down to her knees. Her hair was stiff and brownish and she had a huge sack on one shoulder. She was picking up dirty plastic cups from the floor and stuffing them

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into her sack. Why is she calling me, thought Velu. And why is a girl wearing a *banian*?

"No need to stare stupidly. What's your name?"

"Velu," muttered Velu, looking away.

"So Mr Velu," said the girl, looking at his bundle. "Run away from home?"

Velu didn't answer. He didn't want to tell some strange girl what he had done. He had run away because he couldn't stand his father beating him for one more day. His father would snatch away all the money Velu and his sisters earned and spend it on drink.

"Don't think I don't know. This place is full of children like you. So what are you going to do here? Become rich?"

She sat down next to him. Velu shifted away slightly.

He felt hunger pinching him and pressed his stomach with a grimace. "Hungry?" asked the girl. "You won't get food by sitting here glumly, making faces. I can find some if you want."

She picked up her sack and started to walk away. Velu stayed on the bench. What should he do? Should he follow this girl? Where was she going to take him? She was disappearing into the crowd, so he had to make up his mind quickly. Alright, he decided. Anyway I have no idea where to go. He jumped up and ran after her. She wasn't even looking back to see where he was.

Comprehension Check

1. *Velu stood on the platform but he felt "as if he was still on a moving train". Why?*
2. *What made him feel miserable?*
3. *(i) Velu travelled without a ticket. Why?*
   (ii) How did he escape the ticket collector's attention?
4. *Why had Velu run away from home?*
5. *Why did he decide to follow the 'strange' girl?*

grimace: twisted expression (on the face) due to pain **glumly**: sadly/gloomily

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II

- Velu follows his friend through the crowded streets to a big building.
- Behind the building, there is a big garbage bin.
- Velu wonders why they are there at all.

He caught up with the girl as she was leaving the station. When they got to the road, Velu found that the vehicles kept coming and never stopped for anyone. Smoke and dust flew at him from all sides, making his head spin. They had to wait for a long time before they could find a gap to run through. Velu kept hesitating and the girl finally dragged him to the other side.

"What do you think you're doing? Grazing cows? If you stand around in the middle of the road like that, you'll be *chutney*."

Velu's heart was still beating fast. He looked back at Central Station and the traffic speeding by. How had they managed to come through that? They walked along the side of the road under some

making his head spin: giving him a headache/making him feel dizzy ***chutney***: (here) run over/killed; crushed and ground into *chutney*

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huge signboards. Velu looked up at the pictures: *banians*, car tyres, pens, a woman holding a box. The writing was all in English, so he didn't know what it meant.

The girl turned onto a wide bridge and walked up. Velu stopped and peeped over the railing. Under him, the road ran into the city. In the distance he could see huge buildings and towers and more roads.

"See that big building with the wall around it? If you're not careful, you'll soon be counting bars there." The girl grinned and pointed at a huge building.

Velu squinted and read the Tamil sign, *Central Jail*.

"Why? I haven't done anything wrong."

"You don't have to do anything. Just don't get caught, that's all."

What does she mean, Velu wondered. Meanwhile the girl was already heading down the bridge with the sack on her shoulder. What was in it? He had seen her putting plastic cups into it at the station.

"What are you carrying in that bag?"

"Things. Bottles, paper."

Velu wondered what she was doing with them, but he felt shy to ask any more questions.

It was still morning but the sun blasted down on the tar and Velu's bare feet burned. It was not like walking on a mud road. He was soaked with sweat. He tried hard to walk in the shade and keep up with the girl at the same time. She walked really fast. How far away was the food?

After almost an hour of walking, they stopped in front of a big building. *Sri Rajarajeshwari Prasanna Kalyana Mandapam* read Velu slowly. A sign with letters made of flowers said, *Groom: J. V. Vinayagan, Bride: Rani*. Velu stared at the big cars parked outside. One of the cars had a flower garland and roses taped onto it. The girl looked around, pulled one off quickly and stuck it in her hair.

"Come on," she said.

"Are we going to eat here?" asked Velu, looking at the huge hall and the people inside.

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"Hopes!" said the girl shaking her thumb under his nose. She led him behind the hall. There was a big garbage bin overflowing with rubbish. Two goats were standing on the pile, fighting for a banana leaf. A cloud of flies buzzed around their legs. There was a rotten smell in the air. The girl picked up a squashy banana and held it out to Velu.

"Here's your food."

Velu was shocked. "Are we going to eat their leftovers?"

"*Chey*! What do you think I am? A dog? I only take untouched food. Here, some more, catch!" She threw him a *vada*. Velu looked at it with distaste.

"Come on, hero, eat it! You think I like it? I told you I'll find you something to eat. Don't think I have money to buy food for you. You'd better eat what you get until you have your own money."

Velu hesitated, but his stomach squeezed him again. He gulped down the banana and *vada*. His stomach felt better immediately. He could have eaten at least ten times more, but the girl could find only one more banana which she ate herself.

squashy: crushed **stomach squeezed him:** he was very hungry; his stomach, which was empty, twiched and pained **gulped down:** swallowed quickly (without chewing)

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"It's too early, they've only eaten tiffin. If you're still hungry, you'll have to wait for them to finish lunch. You can wait if you want. I have to work, I'm going." She picked up a couple of bottles from the heap and threw it into her sack. Then she walked off.

Velu panicked. He realised that if the girl left him, he had no idea where he was and what to do. It was better to stick to her, she seemed to know her way around. He ran after her again.

"*Aiy*!" he called. He did not even know the girl's name. "*Aiy*, what is your name?" he asked hurrying behind her.

She stopped and turned around. "Oho! So you've been following me around without even knowing my name. Jaya."

"I'm not following you."

"What then? Who got you food?"

"Can I come with you? Where are you going?"

"Come if you want. This bag is full, I have to go home to get another one."

Comprehension Check

1. *Can Velu read Tamil and English? How do you know?*
2. *"If you are not careful, you will soon be counting bars there," the girl said.*
   (i) What is she referring to?
   (ii) What does she mean when she says "If you are not careful..."? (She says something a little later which means the same. Find that sentence.)
3. *(i) Where did the girl lead Velu to?*
   (ii) What did they get to eat?
4. *What work did she do? Think of a one-word answer.*

III

- There is a row of huts near some dirty puddles.
- Outside one of the huts, Jaya dumps her sack.
- Grateful to his friend, Velu thinks of the days ahead.

Jaya and Velu walked along the roads for half an hour, until they came to a bridge across a dirty trickle of water. "We are in Triplicane now. See, that's Buckingham Canal," said Jaya.

tiffin: snack (not a proper meal) **panicked**: was very worried

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Velu stared. This was a canal? Near some puddles of water was a row of the strangest huts he had ever seen. They were built out of all sorts of things — metal sheets, tyres, bricks, wood and plastic. They stood crookedly and looked as if they would fall any moment.

"Is this where you live? These houses are strange!" said Velu. "In our village, the houses are made of mud and palm leaves."

Jaya went around to one of the huts and dumped her sack outside. Then she picked up an empty one.

"Let's go."

She turned to Velu and gave him a shove. "At least help me now. Here, wear these and come with me."

She threw him a pair of old shoes without laces and pushed a sack and a stick into his hands. Velu was confused. What work did she want him to do with these things? The only work he had ever done was on the landowner's farm, weeding and taking cows out to graze.

"Are there any farms in the city?" he asked Jaya.

crookedly: not straight **shove:** push **weeding:** working in a field removing grass/ digging, etc

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She laughed and thumped her stick on the ground. "Farms! There are no farmers here. We are ragpickers."

"Ragpickers?"

"See my sack? Full of things I collected."

"Collected? From where?" asked Velu.

"From rubbish bins, where else?"

"You collect rubbish?" Velu had never heard of such a thing

"*Ayye*, blockhead. It's not any rubbish. Only paper, plastic, glass, such things. We sell it to Jam Bazaar Jaggu."

Velu was puzzled. He had heard of people throwing away rubbish. But why would anyone want to buy rubbish?

"Who's Jam Bazaar Jaggu? Why's he buying all this?"

"You think he buys it for show? He sells it to a factory. Come on, I don't have time to waste, like you."

Velu did not move. He hadn't run away and come to this new place to dig through garbage bins. Jaya poked at him with her stick.

"Look here!" she shouted. "If someone gets there before us we don't get anything. Don't just stand there, posing. Big hero. I'm trying to help you. Who filled your stomach today?"

Velu scratched his head and sighed. I'll do it for now, he thought, until I find a better job.

GITA WOLF
ANUSHKA RAVISHANKAR
ORIJIT SEN
From *Trash — on Ragpicker Children and Recycling*

Comprehension Check

1. *(i) What material are the 'strange' huts made out of?*
   (ii) Why does Velu find them strange?
2. *What sort of things did Jaya and children like her collect and what did they do with those things?*
3. *Is Velu happy or unhappy to find work? Give a reason for your answer.*

blockhead: fool **posing:** looking important, hoping to impress others

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Exercise

Discuss the following questions in small groups. Write their answers afterwards.

1. Is Velu a smart boy? Which instances in the text show that he is or isn't?
2. Do you think Jaya is a brave and sensitive child with a sense of humour? Find instances of her courage, kind nature and humour in the text.
3. What one throws away as waste may be valuable to others. Do you find this sentence meaningful in the context of this story? How?

Think it Over

- The best investment that a country can make is to put milk into its children.
- People don't notice goodness because it is transparent like water and air; only if it runs out does it become noticeable.
- It is never too late to have a happy childhood.

Is it someone you know?

A busy official known for his love of animals was once passing through a village in a cart. Suddenly he asked the cartman to stop and tried to listen to what sounded like a wail from far away. The cartman asked, "Is it a man you know?" The official replied, "No, it's a dog I don't know."

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0850CH03

3 The Selfish Giant

I

- The Giant's garden was beautiful, and children loved to play in it.
- The Giant, who was selfish, built a high wall round his lovely garden.
- Children did not enter the garden thereafter. Nor did Spring and Summer till the Giant experienced a change of heart.

EVERY afternoon, as they were coming from school, the children used to go and play in the Giant's garden.

It was a large lovely garden, with soft green grass. Here and there over the grass stood beautiful flowers like stars, and there were twelve peach-trees that in the springtime broke out into delicate blossoms of pink and pearl, and in the autumn bore rich fruit. The birds sat on the trees and sang so sweetly that the children used to stop their games in order to listen to them. "How happy we are here!" they cried to each other.

One day the Giant came back. He had been to visit his friend, the Cornish ogre, and had stayed with him for seven years. When he arrived he saw the children playing in the garden.

"What are you doing here?" he cried in a very gruff voice, and the children ran away.

Cornish ogre: a giant of Cornwall (in the U.K.) **ogre:** (in legends and fairy stories) a cruel giant who eats people; (in common usage) a very frightening person **gruff:** rough; surly

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"My own garden is my own garden," said the Giant; "anyone can understand that, and I will allow nobody to play in it but myself." So he built a high wall all round it, and put up a notice-board:

TRESPASSERS WILL BE PROSECUTED

He was a very selfish Giant.

The poor children had now nowhere to play. They tried to play on the road, but the road was very dusty and full of hard stones, and they did not like it. They used to wander round the high walls when their lessons were over, and talk about the beautiful garden inside. "How happy we were there!" they said to each other.

Then the Spring came, and all over the country there were little blossoms and little birds. Only in the garden of the Selfish Giant it was still winter. The birds did not care to sing in it as there were no

trespassers: those who enter somebody's land/property without his/her permission
prosecuted: tried in a court of law (here, punished)

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children, and the trees forgot to blossom. Once a beautiful flower put its head out from the grass, but when it saw the notice-board it was so sorry for the children that it slipped back into the ground again, and went off to sleep. The only people who were pleased were the Snow and the Frost. "Spring has forgotten this garden," they cried, "so we will live here all the year round." The Snow covered up the grass with her great white cloak, and the Frost painted all the trees silver. Then they invited the North Wind to stay with them, and he came. He was wrapped in furs, and he roared all day about the garden, and blew the chimney-pots down. "This is a delightful spot," he said, "we must ask Hail on a visit." So the Hail came. Every day for three hours he rattled on the roof of the castle till he broke most of the slates, and then he ran round and round the garden as fast as he could go. He was dressed in grey, and his breath was like ice.

"I cannot understand why the Spring is so late in coming," said the Selfish Giant, as he sat at the window and looked out at his cold, white garden; "I hope there will be a change in the weather."

But the Spring never came, nor the Summer. The Autumn gave golden fruit to every garden, but to the Giant's garden she gave none. "He is too selfish," she said. So it was always Winter there, and the North Wind and the Hail, and the Frost, and the Snow danced about through the trees.

One morning the Giant was lying awake in bed when he heard some lovely music. It sounded so sweet to his ears that he thought it must be the King's musicians passing by. It was really only a little linnet singing outside his window, but it was so long since he had heard a bird singing in his garden that it seemed to him to be the most beautiful music in the world. Then the Hail stopped dancing over his head, and the North Wind ceased roaring, and a delicious perfume came to him through the open casement. "I believe the Spring has come at last," said the Giant; and he jumped out of bed and looked out.

Snow, Frost, North Wind, Hail: All these have been presented as characters or persons. North Wind is the chilly wind, and Hail is the hailstorm **linnet:** a brownish songbird found in Europe **casement:** window that opens on hinges like a door

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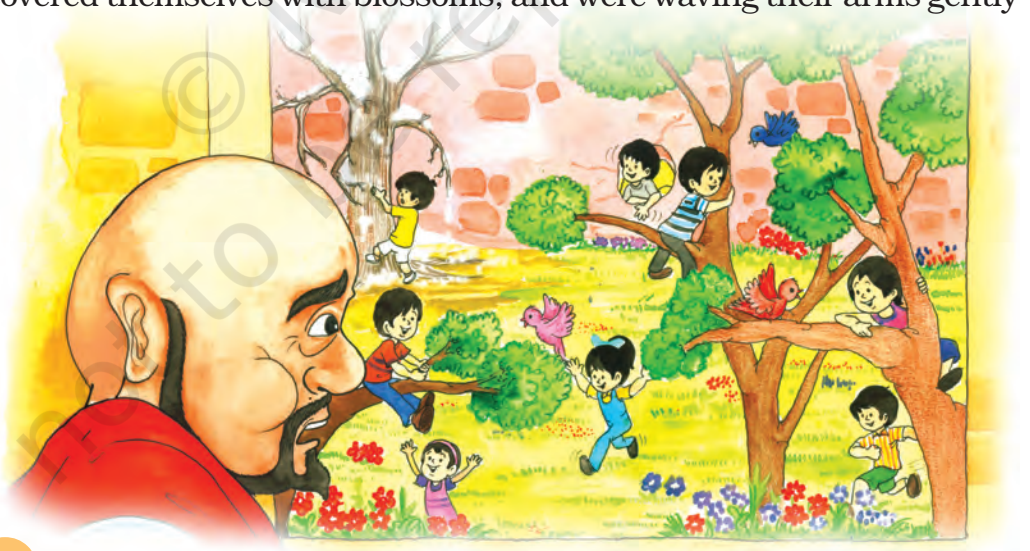
Comprehension Check

1. *Why is the Giant called selfish?*
2. *On one occasion the children said: "How happy we are here!"*
   Later they said: "How happy we were there!"
   What are they referring to in both the cases?
3. *(i) When spring came, it was still winter in the garden. What does winter stand for or indicate here?*
   (ii) Winter has been presented like a story with its own characters and their activities. Describe the story in your own words.
4. *Was the Giant happy or sad over the state of the garden?*
5. *What effect did the linnet's song have over Hail and the North Wind?*

II

- To celebrate the return of the children, trees covered themselves with birds and blossoms.
- The Giant was delighted to see his friends back, especially a little boy whom he loved dearly.
- The little boy soon disappeared only to return much later.

He saw a most wonderful sight. Through a little hole in the wall the children had crept in, and they were sitting in the branches of the trees. In every tree that he could see there was a little child. And the trees were so glad to have the children back again that they had covered themselves with blossoms, and were waving their arms gently



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above the children's heads. The birds were flying about and twittering with delight, and the flowers were looking up through the green grass and laughing. It was a lovely scene. Only in one corner it was still winter. It was the farthest corner of the garden, and in it was standing a little boy. He was so small that he could not reach up to the branches of the tree, and he was wandering all round it, crying bitterly. The poor tree was still covered with frost and snow, and the North Wind was blowing and roaring above it. "Climb up, little boy!" said the Tree, and it bent its branches down as low as it could; but the boy was too tiny.

And the Giant's heart melted as he looked out. "How selfish I have been!" he said; "now I know why the Spring would not come here. I will put that poor little boy on the top of the tree, and then I will knock down the wall, and my garden shall be the children's playground for ever and ever." He was really very sorry for what he had done.

So he crept downstairs and opened the front door quite softly, and went out into the garden. But when the children saw him they were so frightened that they all ran away, and the garden became winter again. Only the little boy did not run, for his eyes were so full of tears that he did not see the Giant coming. And the Giant stole up behind him and took him gently in his hands, and put him up into the tree. And the tree broke at once into blossom, and the birds came and sang on it, and the little boy stretched out his two arms and flung them round the Giant's neck, and kissed him. And the other children, when they saw that the Giant was not wicked any longer, came running

stole up: came quietly without being noticed

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back, and with them came the Spring. “It is your garden now, little children,” said the Giant, and he took a great axe and knocked down the wall. And when the people were going to market at twelve o’clock they found the Giant playing with the children in the most beautiful garden they had ever seen.

All day long they played, and in the evening they came to the Giant to bid him good-bye.

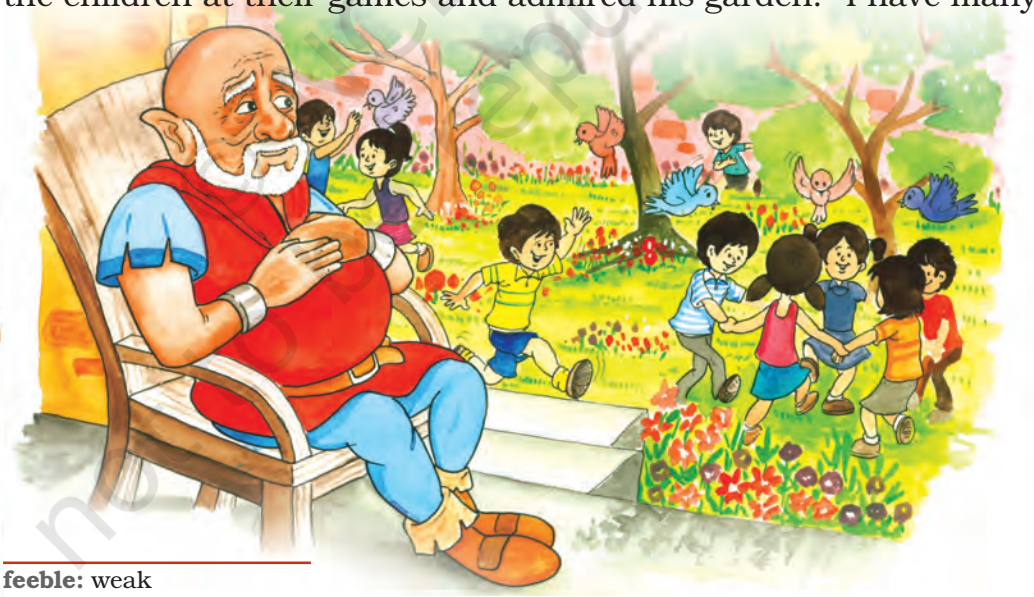
“But where is your little companion?” he said; “the boy I put into the tree?” The Giant loved him the best because he had kissed him.

“We don’t know,” answered the children. “He has gone away.”

“You must tell him to be sure and come tomorrow,” said the Giant. But the children said that they did not know where he lived, and had never seen him before; and the Giant felt very sad.

Every afternoon, when school was over, the children came and played with the Giant. But the little boy whom the Giant loved was never seen again. The Giant was very kind to all the children, yet he longed for his little friend, and often spoke of him. “How I would like to see him!” he used to say.

Years went by, and the Giant grew very old and feeble. He could not play about anymore, so he sat in a huge armchair, and watched the children at their games and admired his garden. “I have many



feeble: weak

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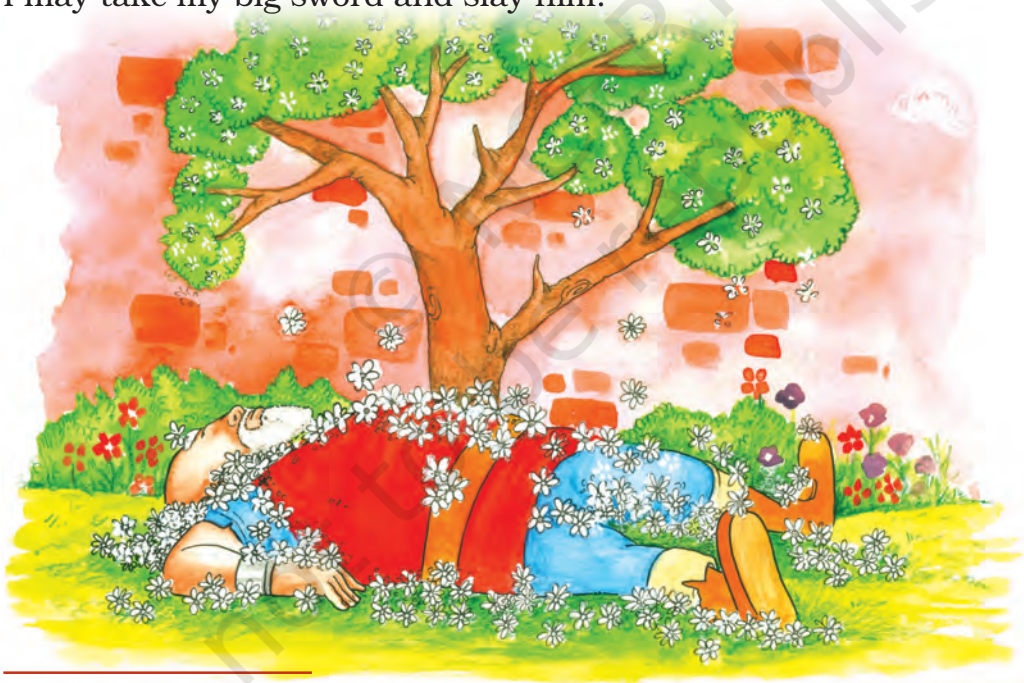
beautiful flowers," he said; "but the children are the most beautiful flowers of all."

One winter morning he looked out of his window as he was dressing. He did not hate the winter now, for he knew that it was merely the Spring asleep, and that the flowers were resting.

Suddenly he rubbed his eyes in wonder and looked and looked. It certainly was a marvellous sight. In the farthest corner of the garden was a tree quite covered with lovely white blossoms. Its branches were golden, and silver fruit hung down from them, and underneath it stood the little boy he had loved.

Downstairs ran the Giant in great joy, and out into the garden. He hastened across the grass, and came near to the child. And when he came quite close his face grew red with anger, and he said, "Who hath dared to wound thee?" For on the palms of the child's hands were the prints of two nails, and the prints of two nails were on the little feet.

"Who hath dared to wound thee?" cried the Giant; "tell me, that I may take my big sword and slay him."



slay: kill **nay:** no

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"Nay!" answered the child: "but these are the wounds of Love."

"Who art thou?" said the Giant, and a strange awe fell on him, and he knelt before the little child.

And the child smiled on the Giant, and said to him, "You let me play once in your garden; today you shall come with me to my garden, which is paradise."

And when the children ran in that afternoon, they found the Giant lying dead under the tree, all covered with white blossoms.

OSCAR WILDE

Comprehension Check

1. *(i) The Giant saw a most wonderful sight. What did he see?*
   (ii) What did he realise on seeing it?
2. *Why was it still winter in one corner of the garden?*
3. *Describe the first meeting of the little boy and the Giant.*
4. *Describe their second meeting after a long interval.*
5. *The Giant lay dead, all covered with white blossoms. What does this sentence indicate about the once selfish Giant?*

Exercise

Discuss the following topics in groups.

1. The little child's hands and feet had marks of nails. Who does the child remind you of? Give a reason for your answer.
2. Is there something like this garden near where you live? Would you like one (without the Giant perhaps) and why? What would you do to keep it in good shape?

Think it Over

- Selfless love involves suffering for others.
- Owning things is human; sharing them is divine.

Who art thou?: Who are you?

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0850CH04

4 The treasure within

Before you read

- *Every child is a potential achiever and is different from other children in her/his style of learning and area of interest.*
- *Read the interview that follows. It is based on a conversation between Ms Bela Raja, editor of* Sparsh, *a newsletter from the Resource Centre, The Valley School, Bangalore, and Mr Hafeez Contractor, one of India's leading architects.*

I

- Hafeez Contractor was an unhappy school boy.
- He loved doing things but detested mechanical learning. Mathematics gave him the shivers.
- What his Principal once said to him influenced him deeply.

HC: "I used to have this terrible nightmare. Only now, over the last four to five years, it seems to have disappeared.

BR: What nightmare are you talking about and why do you think it has disappeared now?

HC: I used to get continuous nightmares about appearing for a maths examination where I did not know anything! Now the psyche must have gotten over it, I don't have to think about education and there is absolutely no time to get nightmares.

nightmare: haunting fear/frightening dream **psyche:** mind or mentality

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BR: Tell us something about your earliest memories in school.

HC: In the first and second year I was a good student. After I reached the third standard, I simply lost interest and I never studied.

I used to be interested in games, running around, playing jokes and pranks on others. I would copy in class during exam times. I would try to get hold of the examination paper that had been prepared and study it, as I could not remember things that had been taught to me in class.

However, later, one sentence spoken to me by my Principal changed my life.

When I approached my eleventh standard, the Principal called me and said, "Look here, Son, I have been seeing you from day one. You are a good student, but you never studied. I have taken care of you till today. Now, I can no longer take care of you so you do it yourself."

He talked to me for five minutes, "You don't have your father, your mother has worked so hard to bring you up and paid all your fees all these years but you have only played games. Now you should rise to the occasion and study."

I used to be a very good sportsman. I had been the senior champion for so many years and I also was the cricket captain. I used to play every game, but that year I did not step out onto the field.

I would go for prayers and all I would do was eat and study. I normally used to copy and pass, but I realised that once I was in SSC, I could not do that.

When I got a second class, 50 per cent, in my SSC my Principal said, "Son, consider yourself as having got a distinction!" This is my memory of my school days.

I did lots of other things. See, as far as my things are concerned, I can't remember. I forget things very easily. To remember, I have to see things as a photograph. I read a

as far as my things are concerned: perhaps he is referring to matters other than course materials and their details

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book and I can remember the matter as a photograph but not through my mind. That is how it works.

BR: When you were in school and you were doing badly, did the teachers pull you up and how did you feel?

HC: I never felt anything on being pulled up. I used to be so interested in playing. I would receive a caning every week.

BR: When you knew that you had incurred the wrath of your teacher by not doing your homework or by behaving badly, when you knew you would get a caning, what was the state of your mind?

HC: State of mind? Just lift up the hand and they would cane you. It would hurt badly and then I would have to forget about it, because I would want to go and play.

BR: You never felt insecure or threatened?

HC: I was just interested in playing and nothing else. I was most interested in funny pranks. One day, I did not want to study, so I created a distraction. For one whole hour we played '*chor* police'.

Every Saturday we were allowed to go into town to see a movie. So what I would do was have no lunch and collect money from 40 – 50 students, and run and buy the tickets. On my way back, I would eat to my heart's content.

I used to be the leader of a gang. We would have gang fights and plan strategies. These things used to interest me more than any academics.

caning: punishment/beating **incurred the wrath of your teacher:** made your teacher furious **distraction:** something amusing and pleasurable ***chor* police:** children's game in which one child (thief) hides and others (policemen) try to find him/her **eat to my heart's content:** eat as much as I wanted; eat my fill **strategies**: methods of winning fights **academics:** academic or educational matters (books, discussions, debates, etc.)

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Students used to book my textbooks for the following year, because they were almost brand new. I probably opened them one day before exams.

Comprehension Check

1. *What did Hafeez Contractor have nightmares about?*
2. *What did the Principal say to him, which influenced him deeply?*
3. *"... that year I did not step out onto the field." What was he busy doing that year?*
4. *(i) What "distraction" did Hafeez Contractor create one day?*
   (ii) Would you have liked to participate in the "distraction" had you been with him?

II

- He stumbled on architecture because he knew little French and less German.
- He was offbeat even in the pranks that he played on others.
- When he found his calling, there was no looking back.

BR: How did you get into the field of architecture?

HC: In the college for architecture, nobody who had got below 80 – 85 per cent was allowed to enter. I had only 50 per cent.

I wanted to join the Army. I got my admission letter but my aunt tore it up. Then I decided that I wanted to join the police force.

My mother said, "Don't join the police force, just do your graduation!" So I went to Jaihind College in Bombay.

There, I was to either take French or German. Though I had studied French for seven years, I did not know seven words of French. So I took German. Then my German teacher died. The college told me that I could change the college or

book: offer to buy in advance; reserve **stumbled on:** got into (architecture) by chance **offbeat:** unusual or unconventional **calling:** work or vocation of his choice

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take French. Now, who would give me admission in another college? I had got admission to Jaihind by influence.

So I thought, 'Okay, I will take French' and I started learning French again. I learnt it from my cousin. She was an architect's wife.

I was going to an architect's office to learn French!

BR: Was it then that you decided you wanted to do architecture?

HC: Actually, it all happened quite by chance.

In the architect's office, I saw somebody drawing a window detail. A window detail is a very advanced drawing.

I told him that his drawing was wrong — that the window he had drawn would not open.

He then had a bet with me and later he found that indeed, his drawing was wrong! My cousin's husband was surprised. He asked me to draw a few specific things, which I immediately did.

He asked me to design a house and I designed a house. After that, he told me to drop everything and join architecture.

We went to meet the Principal of the college.

The Principal warned me, "I will allow you to take part in the entrance exams, but if you do not do well I will not allow you to join."

I got an 'A+' in the entrance exam and from that day it was a cakewalk.

I had never made a plan, but I knew how something looked like, from the top.

I had never known what a section was, but I knew if you cut a plan what it would look like.

I stood first class first throughout, after that.

I believe that all this understanding came from what I used to play and do during school.

I had a friend called Behram Divecha. We used to have competitions between us for designing forts, guns and ammunition. Each of us would design something in an effort to be different.

influence: an important person recommended him for admission/used his influence to get him admitted **cakewalk:** smooth ride/something easy to achieve

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In school, when I was in the second or third standard, one of my teachers, Mrs Gupta, saw my sketches and told me, "See, you are useless in everything else but your sketches are good. When you grow up you become an architect". I did not know at the time but she was right. Later, after I became an architect, I went back to meet her and tell her.

BR: Why do you think you did not like studies? Was it because you felt you could not cope, could not deal with the curriculum?

HC: I was very bad at languages. Science and geography I could deal with, maths was very bad. I just was not interested. I was studying for the sake of studying. What they taught me today, I would forget after two days. I would not bother because there was no application of mind there, to begin with.

BR: Did you think that what they taught in school was boring or did you feel that once you understood the concept of what was being taught, you lost interest in the rest of the lesson?

HC: Living in a boarding school is difficult. We were just living from day to day.

Nowadays, there are so many tests. Back then, whenever we had tests we used to just copy. The teacher thought that we had done our work.

BR: There is a contention that giftedness and learning disabilities go hand in hand. Do you think this applies to you?

HC: Well, take some students from my class. Those who always stood first or second are today doing very ordinary jobs.

BR: I have come across this situation in so many different places where people tell me that their class toppers are doing very ordinarily today.

HC: In school, I think living our lives there made us street smart. I have learnt more by doing what I did on my own than

cope: manage/handle/deal with **curriculum:** (here) school subjects or prescribed courses of study **giftedness:** having special abilities **street smart:** smart by doing things independently/ by choice rather than force

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what academics would have taught me.

BR: That is because the personality and skills were there. You were able to find expression in a manner you were comfortable with and you defied every rule so that nobody would stop you from doing what you needed to do.

Complex designed by Hafeez Contractor

HC: I was more interested in other things. If, for example, while in class, it started raining outside, I would think of the flowing water and how to build a dam to block it. I would be thinking about the flow of water within the dam and how much of water the dam would be able to hold. That was my interest for the day.

When students lost a button while playing or fighting, they would come running to me and I would cut a button for them from chalk, using a blade. Discipline in the school was very important and no student could afford to have a button missing. The student would get past dinner with a full neat uniform and after that it did not matter.

BR: Coming to the present, how do you decide as to what kind of structure you want to give a client?

HC: I look at the client's face, his clothes, the way he talks and pronounces, the way he eats and I would know what his taste would be like. I can relate to people in a way that would be comfortable. I sketch very spontaneously on a paper on the spot. That paper, I give to my people in the office.

BR: You do it instinctively?

defied: broke **instinctively:** naturally (not coming from training or based on reasoning)

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HC: Call it instinct, call it arithmetic, whatever. Now it comes to me like mathematics. Putting design, construction, psychology and sociology together and making a sketch from all that is 'mathematics'.

Here we almost come to a full circle where Mr Contractor has derived his own interpretation of Mathematics — taking it from a subject he hated to a subject he now loves dealing with!

Comprehension Check

1. *Hafeez Contractor wanted to join the police force. Why didn't he?*
2. *In the architect's office, Hafeez Contractor was advised to drop everything and join architecture. Why?*
3. *(i) What was Mrs Gupta's advice to Hafeez Contractor?*
   (ii) What made her advise him so?
4. *How did he help fellow students who had lost a button?*
5. *Which rules did he break as a school boy?*
6. *(i) What is Hafeez Contractor's definition of mathematics?*
   (ii) How would you want to define mathematics? Do you like the subject?

Exercise

Answer the following questions.

1. Is it likely that someone who is original and intelligent does not do very well at school? Should such a learner be called a failure? If not, why not?
2. Who, in your view, is an 'unusual' learner?
3. What can schools do to draw out the best in unusual learners? Suggest whatever seems reasonable to you.

Think it Over

- The only disability in life is a bad attitude.
- Cooperation is doing with a smile what one anyhow has to do.

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Advanced Personalised Learning

A panel of experts from around the world has identified 14 grand challenges for engineering that, if met, may significantly improve the quality of life on earth. The US National Academy of Engineering (NAE) has revealed that the panel's choices fall into four themes—sustainability, health, reducing vulnerability and joy of living.

One of the fourteen challenges is Advanced Personalised Learning, whereby instruction can be individualised based on learning styles, speeds and interests to make learning more reliable.

— from a recent newspaper report

Hafeez Contractor — a profile

Hafeez Contractor was born in 1950. He did his Graduate Diploma in architecture from Mumbai in 1975 and completed his graduation from Columbia University, New York (USA) on a Tata Scholarship. Hafeez Contractor commenced his career with T. Khareghat as an apprentice architect and in 1977 he became the associate partner in the same firm. Between 1977 and 1980 Hafeez was a visiting faculty at the Academy of Architecture, Mumbai. He is a member of the Bombay Heritage Committee and New Delhi Lutyens Bungalow Zone Review Committee.

His practice had modest beginnings in 1982 with a staff of two. Today the firm has over 350 employees including senior associates, architects, interior designers, draftsmen, a civil engineering team and architectural support staff. The firm has conceptualised, designed and executed a wide range of architectural projects like bungalows, residential developments, hospitals, hotels, corporate offices, banking and financial institutions, commercial complexes, shopping malls, educational institutions, recreational and sports facilities, townships, airports, railway stations, urban planning and civic redevelopment projects.

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0850CH05

5 Princess September

I

- *Princess September, like each one of her numerous sisters, receives the gift of a parrot in a golden cage on her father's birthday.*
- *The parrot dies, and by chance a singing bird comes in its place.*
- *The princess shows off her pet to the sisters who advise her to put it in a cage.*

The King and Queen of Siam had many daughters, and the Queen said that it confused her to have to remember so many names. One day the King decided to call them January, February, March (though of course in Siamese) till he came to the youngest whom he called September.

The King of Siam had a peculiar habit. Instead of receiving gifts on his birthday he gave them. One year on his birthday, not having anything else handy, he gave each of his daughters a green parrot in a golden cage. The princesses were very proud of their parrots and they spent an hour every day in teaching them to talk. Presently all the parrots could say 'God save the king' and some of them could say 'Pretty Polly' in no less than seven Oriental languages.

Siam: now Thailand **handy:** immediately available **Oriental:** of the east (the Orient means countries of the Far East. Its opposite is the Occident.);

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But one day when Princess September went to say good morning to her parrot she found it lying dead at the bottom of its golden cage. She burst into a flood of tears, and nothing that her Maids of Honour could say comforted her. She cried so much that the Maids of Honour, not knowing what to do, told the Queen, and the Queen said it was stuff and nonsense and the child had better go to bed without any supper. The Maids of Honour wanted to go to a party, so they put Princess September to bed as quickly as they could and left her by herself. And while she lay in her bed, crying still even though she felt rather hungry, she saw a little bird hop into her room. She wiped her tears and sat up. Then the little bird began to sing and he sang a beautiful song all about the lake in the King's garden and the willow trees that looked at themselves in the still water and the goldfish that glided in and out of the branches that were reflected in it. When he had finished, the Princess was not crying any more and she quite forgot that she had had no supper. "That was a very nice song," she said.

Maids of Honour: women attending the Princess

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The little bird gave her a bow. "Would you care to have me in place of your parrot?" said the little bird. "It's true that I'm not so pretty to look at, but on the other hand I have a much better voice." Princess September clapped her hands with delight and then the little bird hopped on to the end of her bed and sang her to sleep.

When she awoke next day the little bird was still there, and as she opened her eyes he said, "Good morning!" The Maids of Honour brought in her breakfast, and he ate rice out of her hand and he had his bath in her saucer. He began to sing again so beautifully that the Maids of Honour were quite surprised, for they had never heard anything like it, and Princess September was very proud and happy.

"Now I want to show you to my eight sisters," said the Princess.

She stretched out the first finger of her right hand so that it served as a perch and the little bird flew down and sat on it. Then, followed by her Maids of Honour, she went through the palace and called on each of the Princesses. And for each of them the little bird sang a different song. But the parrots could only say 'God save the king' and 'Pretty Polly'. At last she showed the little bird to the King and the Queen. They were surprised and delighted.

"I knew I was right to send you to bed without any supper," said the Queen.

"This bird sings much better than the parrots," said the King.

"I should have thought you got quite tired of hearing people say 'God save the king'," said the Queen. "I can't think why those girls wanted to teach their parrots to say it too."

"The sentiment is admirable," said the King, "and I never mind how often I hear it. But I do get tired of hearing those parrots say 'Pretty Polly'."

"They say it in seven different languages," said the Princesses.

"I dare say they do," said the King, "but it reminds me too much of my Councillors. They say the same thing in seven different ways and it never means anything in any way they say it."

perch: place where a bird sits or rests **I dare say:** I agree/accept (that it is true)

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The Princesses were vexed at this, and the parrots looked very glum indeed. But Princess September ran through all the rooms of the palace, singing like a lark, while the little bird flew round and round her singing like a nightingale.

Things went on like this for several days and then the eight Princesses put their heads together. They went to September and sat down in a circle round her. "My poor September," they said, "we are sorry for the death of your beautiful parrot. It must be dreadful for you not to have a pet bird as we have. So we have all put our pocket-money together and we are going to buy you a lovely green and yellow parrot."

"Thank you for nothing," said September. "I have a pet bird which sings the most charming songs to me and I don't know what on earth I should do with a green and yellow parrot."

"Well, my dear," they said, "it's absurd to talk of your bird when the little fellow flies in and out just as he likes." They looked round the room and raised their eyebrows.

vexed: distressed; worried **glum:** sad **put their heads together:** discussed amongst themselves to take a decision

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"Do you mind our asking where your bird is now?" they said.

"He has gone to pay a visit to his father-in-law," said Princess September.

"And what makes you think he'll come back?" asked the Princesses.

"He always does come back," said September.

"Well, my dear," said the eight Princesses, "if you'll take our advice you won't run any risks like that. If he comes back, and mind you, if he does you'll be lucky, pop him into the cage and keep him there. That's the only way you can be sure of him."

"But I like to have him fly about the room," said the young Princess September.

"Safety first," said her sisters ominously.

They got up and walked out of the room, shaking their heads, and they left September very uneasy.

Comprehension Check

1. *How many daughters did the royal couple have?*
2. *Why were they named after the months of the year?*
3. *The King had a peculiar habit. What was it? Why is it called peculiar?*
4. *(i) What was Princess September's reaction to the loss of her parrot?*
   (ii) What was her mother's reaction to it?
   (iii) What do the reactions indicate about the nature and temperament of each?
5. *What pulled the Princess out of her gloom?*
6. *How did the Maids of Honour come to know that the Princess and the bird had become intimate friends?*
7. *The new bird was full of new songs but the old parrots always repeated themselves. What did they say?*
8. *What is the King's opinion about his Councillors? Why did he form that opinion?*
9. *(i) The eight Princesses made an offer to Princess September. What was it?*
   (ii) Why, in your view, did they do it?
10. *What did the sisters advise the Princess to do about her bird?*

pop: put; push **ominously:** threateningly – suggesting that something bad was about to happen

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II

- *Princess September loves the bird far too much to take chances, and acts upon her sisters' advice.*
- *The bird cannot overcome the loss of freedom.*
- *Princess September decides to put the bird's happiness above her own.*

It seemed to Princess September that her little bird had been away a long time. Something might have happened to him. What with hawks and with snares you never knew what trouble he might get into. Besides, he might forget her, or he might take a fancy to somebody else. That would be dreadful. She wished he were safely back again.

Suddenly September heard a 'tweet-tweet' just behind her ear and she saw the little bird sitting on her shoulder. He had come in so quietly and alighted so softly that she had not heard him.

"I wondered what on earth had become of you," said the Princess.

"I thought you'd wonder that," said the little bird. "The fact is I very nearly didn't come back tonight at all. My father-in-law was giving a party and they all wanted me to stay, but I thought you'd be anxious."

Under the circumstances this was a very unfortunate remark for the little bird to make.

September felt her heart go thump against her chest, and she made up her mind to take no more risks. She put up her hand and took

snares: traps for catching birds or animals **alighted:** came down

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hold of the bird. The bird suspected nothing and he was so surprised when she carried him over to the cage, popped him in, and shut the door on him that for a moment he could think of nothing to say. But in a moment or two he hopped up to the ivory perch and said, "What is the joke?"

"There's no joke," said September, "but some of mamma's cats are prowling about tonight, and I think you're much safer in there."

"Well, just for this once I don't mind," said the little bird, "so long as you let me out in the morning."

He ate a very good supper and then began to sing. But in the middle of his song he stopped.

"I don't know what is the matter with me," he said, "but I don't feel like singing tonight."

"Very well," said September, "go to sleep instead."

So he put his head under his wing and in a minute was fast asleep. September went to sleep too. But when the dawn broke she was awakened by the little bird calling her at the top of his voice.

"Wake up, wake up," he said. "Open the door of this cage and let me out. I want to have a good fly while the dew is still on the ground."

"You are much better off where you are," said September.

"Let me out, let me out," said the little bird. And he tried to slip through the bars of the cage, but of course couldn't, and he beat against the door, but of course he couldn't open it. Then the eight Princesses came in and looked at him. They told September she was very wise to take their advice. They said he would soon get used to the cage and in a few days would quite forget he had ever been free. The little bird said nothing at all while they were there, but as soon as they were gone he began to cry again: "Let me out, let me out."

prowling: moving about quietly

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"Don't be such an old silly," said September. "I've put you in the cage because I'm so fond of you. I know what's good for you much better than you do yourself. Sing me a little song and I'll give you a piece of sugar."

But the little bird stood in the corner of his cage looking out at the blue sky, and never sang a note.

"What's the good of sulking?" said September. "Why don't you sing and forget your troubles?"

"How can I sing?" answered the bird. "I want to see the trees and the lake and the green rice growing in the fields."

"I'll take you out every day," she said.

"It's not the same thing," said the little bird. "The rice-fields and the lake and the willow trees look quite different when you see them through the bars of a cage."

The bird wouldn't sing a song and he wouldn't eat a thing. The Princess was a little anxious at this, and asked her sisters what they thought about it.

"You must be firm," they said.

"But if he won't eat, he'll die," she answered.

"That would be very ungrateful of him," they said. "He must know that you're only thinking of his own good. If he's obstinate and dies it'll serve him right and you'll be well rid of him."

September didn't see how that was going to do *her* very much good, but they were eight to one and all older than she, so she said nothing.

"Perhaps he'll have got used to his cage by tomorrow," she said.

And next day when she awoke she cried out good morning in a cheerful voice. She got no answer. She jumped out of bed and ran to the cage. She gave a startled cry, for there the little bird lay,

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at the bottom, on his side, with his eyes closed, and he looked as if he were dead. She opened the door and putting her hand in lifted him out. She gave a sob of relief, for she felt that his little heart was beating still.

"Wake up, wake up, little bird," she said.

She began to cry and her tears fell on the little bird. He opened his eyes and saw that the bars of the cage were no longer around him.

"I cannot sing unless I'm free, and if I cannot sing I die," he said.

The Princess gave a great sob.

"Then take your freedom," she said. "I shut you in a golden cage because I loved you and wanted to have you all to myself. But I never knew it would kill you. I love you enough to let you be happy in your own way."

She threw open the window and gently placed the little bird on the sill. He shook himself a little.

"Come and go as you will, little bird," she said. "I will never put you in a cage any more."

"I will come because I love you, little Princess," said the bird. "And I will sing you the loveliest songs I know. I shall go far away, but I

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shall always come back and I shall never forget you." He gave himself another shake. "Good gracious me, how stiff I am," he exclaimed.

Then he opened his wings and flew right away into the blue. But the little Princess burst into tears, for it is very difficult to put the happiness of someone you love before your own, and with her little bird far out of sight she felt, all of a sudden, very lonely. When her sisters knew what had happened they mocked her and said that the little bird would never return. But he did, at last. And he sat on September's shoulder and ate out of her hand and sang her the beautiful songs he had learned while he was flying up and down the fair places of the world. September kept her window open day and night so that the little bird might come into her room whenever he felt inclined, and this was very good for her; so she grew extremely beautiful.

And when she was old enough she married the King of Cambodia and was carried on a white elephant all the way to the city in which the King lived. But her sisters never slept with their windows open, so they grew extremely ugly as well as disagreeable, and when the time came to marry them off they were given away to the King's Councillors with a pound of tea and a Siamese cat.

SOMERSET MAUGHAM
[slightly abridged]

Comprehension Check

1. *In the following sentence elaborate the parts given in bold.* ***Under the circumstances*** *it was* ***a very unfortunate remark*** *for the bird to make.*
2. *(i) What did Princess September do to ensure the safety of her pet?*
   (ii) How did the bird react to it?
3. *Why did the bird refuse to be taken out in her cage?*
4. *(i) What persuaded Princess September to give the bird his freedom again?*
   (ii) How did the bird react to it?
5. *Princess September kept her window open day and night.*
   (i) How did it help the bird?
   (ii) How did it help the Princess herself?
6. *The eight sisters kept their windows shut. How did it affect them?*

disagreeable: unpleasant

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Exercise

Discuss the following questions in small groups. Write their answers later.

1. Are the sisters unkind and cruel? Find evidence in the text to support your idea.
2. Which, to you, is the most important idea in this story, and why?
   (i) importance of music
   (ii) value of freedom
   (iii) beauty of nature

Think it Over

- There are two ways to study butterflies: chase them with nets then inspect their dead bodies, or sit quietly in a garden and watch them dance among the flowers.
- Freedom practises its own logic. It puts a bouquet of rights in your right hand and a basket of duties in your left hand. This is merely to help you walk straight.
- To be free is to be disciplined. Who knew it better than a young enthusiast walking down the road swinging his arms wildly. When he accidentally hit an old gentleman on the tip of his nose, the man asked "What do you think you are doing?"

"I'm sorry", said the enthusiast, "but it's a free country. I am swinging my arms."

"Remember," advised the old man, "your freedom ends where my nose begins."

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6 The fight

I

- Ranji discovers a pool in the forest and plunges into it for a swim.
- There is serious trouble between him and someone else over who has a right to the pool. A fight ensues.
- The first round ends in a draw.

RANJI had been less than a month in Rajpur when he discovered the pool in the forest. It was the height of summer, and his school had not yet opened, and, having as yet made no friends in this semi-hill station, he wandered about a good deal by himself into the hills and forests that stretched away interminably on all sides of the town. It was hot, very hot, at that time of the year, and Ranji walked about in his vest and shorts, his brown feet white with the chalky dust that flew up from the ground. The earth was parched, the grass brown, the trees listless, hardly stirring, waiting for a cool wind or a refreshing shower of rain.

It was on such a day — a hot, tired day — that Ranji found the pool in the forest. The water had a gentle translucency, and you could see the smooth round pebbles at the bottom of the pool. A small stream emerged from a cluster of rocks to feed the pool. During the monsoon, this stream would be a gushing torrent, cascading down from the hills, but during the summer, it was barely a trickle.

interminably: endlessly **parched**: hot and dry **translucency**: clarity (possible to see through) **torrent**: rushing stream (of water) **cascading**: coming down (like a waterfall) **trickle**: weak or thin flow of water.

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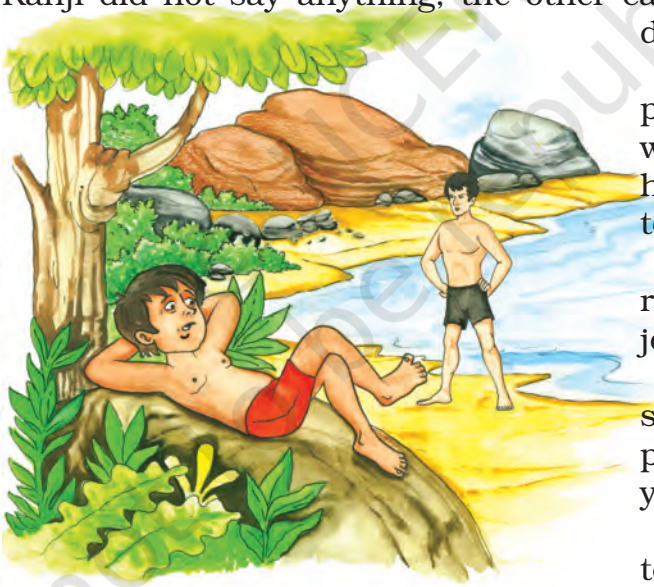
The rocks, however, held the water in the pool, and it did not dry up like the pools in the plains.

When Ranji saw the pool, he did not hesitate to get into it. He had often gone swimming, alone or with friends, when he had lived with his parents in a thirsty town in the middle of the Rajputana desert. There, he had known only sticky, muddy pools, where buffaloes wallowed and women washed clothes. He had never seen a pool like this — so clean and cold and inviting. He leapt into the water. His limbs were supple, free of any fat, and his dark body glistened in patches of sunlit water.

The next day he came again to quench his body in the cool waters of the forest pool. He was there for almost an hour sliding in and out of the limpid green water, or lying stretched out on the smooth yellow rocks in the shade of broad-leaved sal trees. It was while he lay thus that he noticed another boy standing a little distance away, staring at him in a rather hostile manner. The other boy was a little older than Ranji — taller, thickset, with a broad nose and thick, red lips. He had only just noticed Ranji, and when Ranji did not say anything, the other called out, "What are you doing here, Mister?"



Ranji, who was prepared to be friendly, was taken aback at the hostility of the other's tone.

"I am swimming," he replied. "Why don't you join me?"

"I always swim alone," said the other. "This is my pool; I did not invite you here."

The stranger strode up to Ranji, who still sat on

wallowed: rolled about (in mud or dirty water) **quench**: cool (his body) **thickset**: stout/solidly built **taken aback**: surprised **hostility**: ill will/enmity

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the rock and, planting his broad feet firmly on the sand, said (as though this would settle the matter once and for all), "Don't you know I am a Warrior? I do not take replies from villagers like you!"

"So you like to fight with villagers?" said Ranji. "Well, I am not a villager. I am a Fighter!"

"I am a Warrior!"

"I am a Fighter!"

They had reached an impasse. One had said he was a Warrior, the other had proclaimed himself a Fighter. There was little else that could be said.

"You understand that I am a Warrior?" said the stranger, feeling that perhaps this information had not penetrated Ranji's head.

"I have heard you say it three times," replied Ranji.

"Then why are you not running away?"

"I am waiting for you to run away!"

"I will have to beat you," said the stranger, assuming a violent attitude, showing Ranji the palm of his hand.

"I am waiting to see you do it," said Ranji.

"You will see me do it," said the other boy.

Ranji waited. The other boy made a strange, hissing sound. They stared each other in the eye for almost a minute. Then the Warrior slapped Ranji across the face with all the force he could muster. Ranji staggered, feeling quite dizzy. There were thick red finger marks on his cheek.

"There you are!" exclaimed his assailant. "Will you be off now?"

For answer, Ranji swung his arm up and pushed a hard, bony fist into the other's face.

And then they were at each other's throats, swaying on the rock, tumbling on to the sand, rolling over and over, their legs and arms locked in a desperate, violent struggle. Gasping and cursing, clawing and slapping, they rolled into the shallows of the pool.

Even in the water the fight continued as, spluttering and covered with mud, they groped for each other's head and throat. But after

impasse: (also pronounced *ampass*) deadlock; place or position from which there is no way out **penetrated**: gone through/into **muster**: (*here*) use; collect or gather **staggered**: felt weak/unsteady (due to the blow) **assailant:** the person who attacks; (here) enemy/ adversary **swaying**: moving from side to side (in the fight) **spluttering**: speaking quickly/confusedly

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five minutes of frenzied, unscientific struggle, neither boy had emerged victorious. Their bodies heaving with exhaustion, they stood back from each other, making tremendous efforts to speak.

"Now — now do you realise — I am a Warrior?" gasped the stranger.

"Do you know I am a Fighter?" said Ranji with difficulty.

They gave a moment's consideration to each other's answers and, in that moment of silence, there was only their heavy breathing and the rapid beating of their hearts.

"Then you will not leave the pool?" said the warrior.

"I will not leave it," said Ranji.

"Then we shall have to continue the fight," said the other.

"All right," said Ranji.

But neither boy moved, neither took the initiative.

The warrior had an inspiration.

"We will continue the fight tomorrow," he said. "If you dare to

frenzied: violent **exhaustion**: tiredness/fatigue **tremendous**: great **rapid**: quick/fast **inspiration**: (here) a new idea.

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come here again tomorrow, we will continue this fight, and I will not show you mercy as I have done today."

"I will come tomorrow," said Ranji. "I will be ready for you."

They turned from each other then and, going to their respective rocks, put on their clothes, and left the forest by different routes.

Comprehension Check

1. *In what way is the forest pool different from the one which Ranji knew in the Rajputana desert?*
2. *The other boy asked Ranji to 'explain' himself.*
   (i) What did he expect Ranji to say?
   (ii) Was he, in your opinion, right or wrong to ask this question?
3. *Between Ranji and the other boy, who is trying to start a quarrel? Give a reason for your answer.*
4. *"Then we will have to continue the fight," said the other.*
   (i) What made him say that?
   (ii) Did the fight continue? If not, why not?

II

- Next day the two claimants face each other across the pool.
- They throw challenges and counter-challenges at each other.
- The best solution, they realise, lies not in fighting each other but fighting together for something.

When Ranji got home, he found it difficult to explain the cuts and bruises that showed on his face, leg and arms. It was difficult to conceal the fact that he had been in an unusually violent fight, and his mother insisted on his staying at home for the rest of the day. That evening, though, he slipped out of the house and went to the bazaar, where he found comfort and solace in a bottle of vividly coloured lemonade and a banana leaf full of hot, sweet *jalebis*. He had just finished the lemonade when he saw his adversary coming down the road. His first impulse was to turn away and look elsewhere, his second to throw the lemonade bottle at his enemy. But he did neither of

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these things. Instead, he stood his ground and scowled at his passing adversary. And the warrior said nothing either but scowled back with equal ferocity.

The next day was as hot as the previous one. Ranji felt weak and lazy and not at all eager for a fight. His body was stiff and sore after the previous day's encounter. But he could not refuse the challenge. Not to turn up at the pool would be an acknowledgement of defeat. From the way he felt just then he knew he would be beaten in another fight. But he could not acquiesce in his own defeat. He must defy his enemy to the last, or outwit him, for only then could he gain his respect. If he surrendered now, he would be beaten for all time; but to fight and be beaten today left him free to fight and be beaten again. As long as he fought, he had a right to the pool in the forest.

scowled: looked angrily **adversary**: opponent/enemy **ferocity**: fierceness (suggesting anger/cruelty) **acquiesce**: accept quietly

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He was half hoping that the warrior would have forgotten the challenge, but these hopes were dashed when he saw his opponent sitting, stripped to the waist, on a rock on the other side of the pool. The warrior was rubbing oil on his body. He saw Ranji beneath the sal trees, and called a challenge across the waters of the pool.

"Come over on this side and fight!" he shouted.

But Ranji was not going to submit to any conditions laid down by his opponent.

"Come this side and fight!" he shouted back with equal vigour.

"Swim across and fight me here!" called the other. "Or perhaps you cannot swim the length of this pool?"

But Ranji could have swum the length of the pool a dozen times without tiring, and here he would show the warrior his superiority. So, slipping out of his vest, he dived straight into the water, cutting through it like a knife, and surfaced with hardly a splash. The warrior's mouth hung open in amazement.

"You can dive!" he exclaimed.

"It is easy," said Ranji, treading water, waiting for a further challenge. "Can't you dive?"

"No," said the other. "I jump straight in. But if you will tell me how, I will make a dive."

"It is easy," said Ranji. "Stand on the rock, stretch your arms out and allow your head to displace your feet."

The warrior stood up, stiff and straight, stretched out his arms, and threw himself into the water. He landed flat on his belly, with a crash that sent the birds screaming out of the trees.

Ranji dissolved into laughter.

vigour: strength **treading water**: keeping oneself upright in deep water by moving the feet

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"Are you trying to empty the pool?" he asked, as the warrior came to the surface, spouting water like a small whale.

"Wasn't it good?" asked the boy, evidently proud of his feat.

"Not very good," said Ranji. "You should have more practice. See, I will do it again."

And pulling himself up on a rock, he executed another perfect dive. The other boy waited for him to come up, but, swimming under water, Ranji circled him and came upon him from behind.

"How did you do that?" asked the astonished youth.

"Can't you swim under water?" asked Ranji.

"No, but I will try it."

The warrior made a tremendous effort to plunge to the bottom of the pool and indeed he thought he had gone right down, though his bottom, like a duck's, remained above surface.

Ranji, however, did not discourage him.

"It was not bad," he said. "But you need a lot of practice."

"Will you teach me?" asked his enemy.

"If you like, I will teach you."

"You must teach me. If you do not teach me, I will beat you. Will you come here every day and teach me?"

"If you like," said Ranji. They had pulled themselves out of the water, and were sitting side by side on a smooth grey rock.

"My name is Suraj," said the warrior. "What is yours?"

"It is Ranji."

"I am strong, am I not?" asked Suraj, bending his arm so that a ball of muscle stood up stretching the white of his flesh."

"You are strong," said Ranji. "You are a real *pahelwan*."

"One day I will be the world's champion wrestler," said Suraj, slapping his thighs, which shook with the impact of his hand. He looked critically at Ranji's hard, thin body. "You are quite strong yourself," he conceded. "But you are too bony. I know, you people do not eat enough. You must come and have your food with me. I drink one seer of milk every day. We have got our own cow! Be my

feat: clever act; special skill **plunge**: jump **conceded**: admitted **seer:** same as *ser*, a unit of weight used previously in India. A *ser*, a little less than a litre, was one-fortieth of a maund.

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friend, and I will make you a *pahelwan* like me! I know — if you teach me to dive and swim underwater, I will make you a *pahelwan*! That is fair, isn't it?"

"That is fair!" said Ranji, though he doubted if he was getting the better of the exchange.

Suraj put his arm around the younger boy and said, "We are friends now, yes?"

They looked at each other with honest, unflinching eyes, and in that moment love and understanding were born.

"We are friends," said Ranji.

The birds had settled again in their branches, and the pool was quiet and limpid in the shade of the sal trees.

"It is our pool," said Suraj. "Nobody else can come here without our permission. Who would dare?"

"Who would dare?" said Ranji, smiling with the knowledge that he had won the day.

RUSKIN BOND

Comprehension Check

1. *What is it that Ranji finds difficult to explain at home?*
2. *Ranji sees his adversary in the bazaar.*
   (i) What does he wish to do?
   (ii) What does he actually do, and why?
3. *Ranji is not at all eager for a second fight. Why does he go back to the pool, then?*

unflinching: (without blinking) looking straight at each other **limpid**: clear

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4. *Who was the better swimmer? How do you know it?*
5. *What surprises the warrior?*
6. *Now that they are at the pool, why don't they continue the fight?*
7. *Ranji's superiority over the other boy is obvious in the following:*

   physical strength, good diving, his being a fighter, sense of humour, swimming under water, making a good point, willingness to help

   Underline the relevant phrases.
8. *What, according to you, makes the two adversaries turn into good friends in a matter of minutes? Explain it as you have understood it.*

Exercise

Discuss the following topics in small groups.

1. Is fighting the only way of resolving differences of opinion? What else can be done to reach a mutually acceptable settlement?
2. Have you ever been in a serious fight only to realise later that it was unnecessary and futile? Share your experience/views with others frankly and honestly.
3. Why do some of us find it necessary to prove that we are better than others? Will you be amused or annoyed to read the following sign at the back of the car in front of you?

   I may be going slow but I am ahead of you.

Think it Over

- Good friends are like stars. You don't always see them, but you know they are there.
- Success is the outline of a rest house on the horizon. Effort is the uneven path leading towards it. Destiny is the vehicle in which one arrives.

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0850CH08

7 Jalebis

I

- An honest boy is on his way to school carrying money in his pocket to pay the school fees.
- The sight of crisp, syrupy *jalebis* in the market excites him and the coins in his pocket begin to jingle.
- After a long debate with himself, he yields to the sweet temptation.

It happened many years ago. I was in the fifth standard at the government school, Kambelpur, now called Atak. One day, I went to school with four rupees in my pocket to pay the school fees and the fund. When I got there I found that the teacher who collected the fees, Master Ghulam Mohammed, was on leave and so the fees would be collected the next day. All through the day the coins simply sat in my pocket, but once school got over and I was outside, they began to speak.

All right. Coins don't talk. They jingle or go khanak-khanak. But I'm telling you, that day they actually spoke! One *coin* said, "What are you thinking about? Those fresh, hot *jalebis* coming out of the *kadhao* in the shop over there, they're not coming out for nothing. *Jalebis* are meant to be eaten and only those with money

khanak-khanak: sound of jingling of coins ***jalebis***: syrupy Indian sweet ***kadhao***: large, open pot for cooking/boiling

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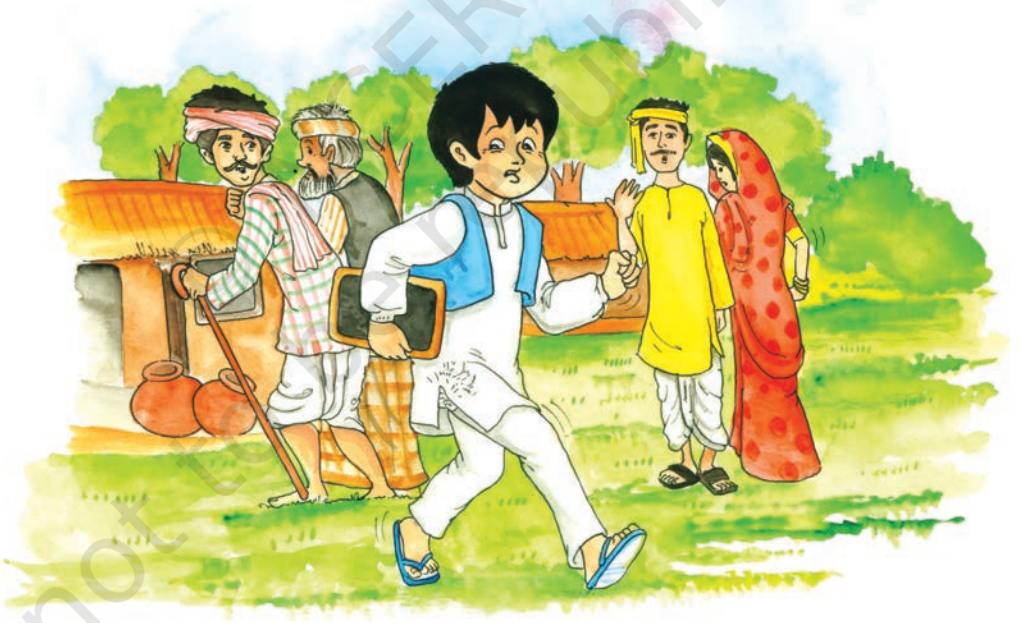
in their pocket can eat them, And money isn't for nothing. Money is meant to be spent and only they spend it, who like *jalebis*."

"Look here, you four rupees, I said to them. I am a good boy. Don't misguide me or it won't be good for you. I get so much at home that I consider even looking at something in the *bazaar* a sin. Besides, you are my fees and fund money. If I spend you today, then how shall I show my face to Master Ghulam Mohammed in school tomorrow and after that to *Allah miyan* at *Qayamat*? You probably don't know it but when Master Ghulam Mohammed gets angry and makes you stand on the bench, he simply forgets to let you sit till the last bell rings. So it's best you stop chewing at my ears like this and let me go home straight."

The coins disliked what I'd said so much that all of them began to speak at the same time. There was such a clamour that passersby in the *bazaar* stared, eyes wide with surprise, at me and my pocket. The coin of those days, the wretched thing, made so much more noise too! Finally, in a panic, I grabbed all four of them and held them tight in my fist and then they were silent.



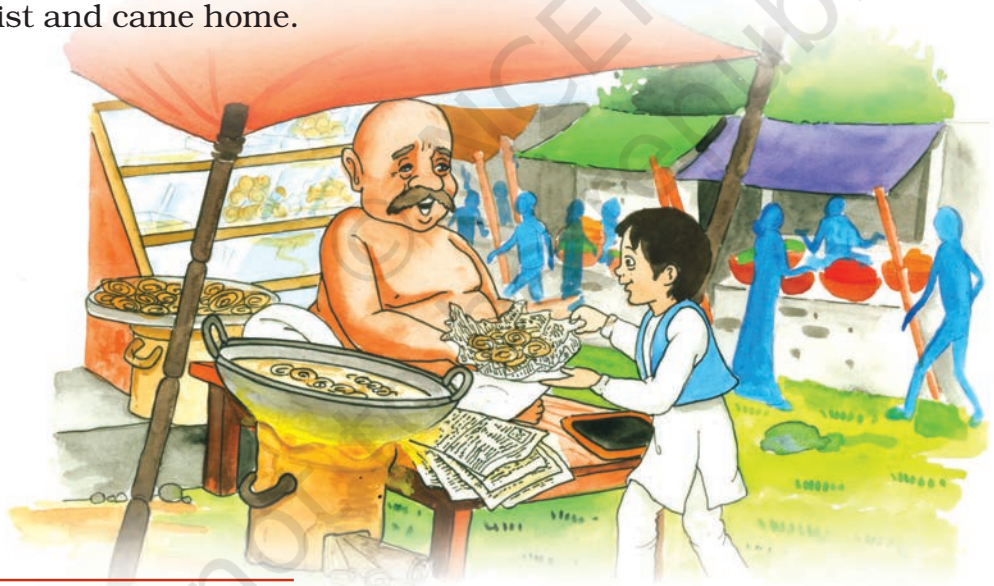
clamour: loud noise

Reprint 2024-25

After taking a few steps, I loosened my grip. Immediately, the oldest coin said, "Here we are trying to tell you something for your own good and you try to strangle us instead. Tell me honestly now, don't you feel like eating those hot, hot *jalebis*? And then, if you do end up spending us for today, won't you get the scholarship money tomorrow? Sweets with the fees money, fees with the scholarship money. End of story! *Kissa khatam, paisa hazam*."

What you're saying isn't right, I replied, but it isn't that wrong either. Listen. Stop blabbering and let me think. I am not a common sort of boy. But then, these *jalebis* are no common sort of *jalebis* either. They're crisp, fresh and full of sweet syrup.

My mouth watered, but I wasn't about to be swept away so easily. In school I was among the most promising students. In the fourth standard exams, I had even won a scholarship of four rupees a month. Besides, I came from a particularly well-to-do family, so I enjoyed considerable prestige. I'd never once been beaten so far. On the contrary, Masterji had got me to beat the other boys. For a child of such status, standing there in the middle of the bazaar eating *jalebis*? No. It wasn't right, I decided. I clenched the *rupiyas* in my fist and came home.



Kissa khatam paisa hazam: end of story (literally: story ends, money disappears)
blabbering: talking confusedly **prestige**: respect

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The coins were so keen on being spent that day, they kept up their attempts at persuasion till their voices began to choke. When I reached home and sat on the bed, they began to speak. I went inside to have lunch, they began to shriek. Thoroughly fed up, I rushed out of the house barefoot and ran towards the *bazaar*. Terrified I was, but quickly I told the *halwai* to weigh a whole rupee worth of *jalebis*. His astonished look seemed to be asking where I had the handcart in which I would carry all those *jalebis*. Those were inexpensive times. One rupee fetched more than twenty rupees does nowadays. The *halwai* opened up a whole newspaper and heaped a pile of *jalebis* on it.

Comprehension Check

1. *Why didn't he pay the school fees on the day he brought money to school?*
2. *(i) What were the coins 'saying' to him?*
   (ii) Do you think they were misguiding him?
3. *Why didn't he take the coins' advice? Give two or three reasons.*
4. *(i) What did the oldest coin tell him?*
   (ii) Did he follow his advice? If not, why not?
5. *He reached home with the coins in his pocket. What happened then?*

II

- A heap of *jalebis* he eats, and shares them liberally with one and all.
- Though penniless now, he feels no less important than a mob leader.
- The real problem at hand is payment of school fees on time.

Just as I was gathering up the heap, in the distance I spotted our *tonga*. Chachajaan was returning from Court. I clutched the *jalebis* to my chest and ran into a *gali*. When I reached a safe corner, I began to devour the *jalebis*. I ate so many... so many *jalebis* that if anyone pressed my stomach a little, *jalebis* would have popped out of my ears and nostrils.

persuasion: coaxing *halwai*: sweetmeat seller *tonga*: two-wheeled, horse-drawn vehicle **gali**: narrow lane

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Very quickly, boys from the entire neighbourhood assembled in the *gali*. By that time I was so pleased with my stomach full of *jalebis* that I got into the mood for some fun. I started handing out *jalebis* to the children around. Delighted they ran off, jumping and screaming, into the *galis*. Soon a whole lot of other children appeared, probably having heard the good news from the others. I dashed to the *halwai* and bought one more rupee's worth of *jalebis*, came back and stood on the *chabutara* of one of the houses, liberally distributing *jalebis* to the children just like the Governor *saheb* used to distribute rice to the poor and needy on Independence day. By now there was a huge mob of children around me. The beggars too launched an assault! If children could be elected to the Assembly, my success would have been assured that day. Because one little signal from my *jalebi*-wielding hand and the mob would have been willing to kill and get killed for me. I bought *jalebis* for the remaining two rupees as well and distributed them. Then I washed my hands and mouth at the public tap and returned home, putting on such an innocent face, as if I hadn't even seen the hint of a *jalebi* all my

chabutara: platform **assault**: attack ***jalebi*-wielding hand**: the hand that held *jalebis*

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life. *Jalebis* I had gobbled up easily enough, but digesting them became another matter. With every breath came a burp, and with every burp, the danger of bringing out a *jalebi* or two — the fear was killing me. At night I had to eat my dinner as well. If I hadn't eaten I would have been asked to explain why I did not want any food, and if I had pretended illness the doctor would have been summoned and if the doctor, after feeling my pulse, had declared, Munna has devoured a mound of *jalebis,* I would simply die.

The result was that all night I lay, coiled up like a *jalebi*, suffering a stomach ache. Thank God I didn't have to eat all four rupees worth of *jalebis* by myself. Otherwise, as they say, when children speak, flowers shower from their mouths but I would be the first child in the world with whose every word a crisp, fried *jalebi* would come out.

Chidren don't have stomachs, they have digestion machines. My machine too kept working right through the night. In the morning, just like any other day, I washed my face and like a virtuous student, with chalk and slate in hand, I headed for school. I knew I would get the previous month's scholarship that day and once I'd paid the fees with that amount, the *jalebis* would be completely digested. But when I got to school, I found out that the scholarship was going to be paid the following month. My head started to spin. I felt as if I was standing on my head and could not get on to my feet again even if I tried. Master Ghulam Mohammed announced that the fees would be taken during the recess. When the recess bell rang, I tucked my bag under my arm and left the school and simply followed my nose, walking on and on... If no mountain or ocean blocked my path, I would have kept going till the earth ended and the sky began, and once I got there, I would say to *Allah miyan*. "Just this once save me. Order a *farishta* to pass by and drop just four rupees in my pocket. I promise I will use them only to pay my fees and not to eat *jalebis*."

I couldn't reach the point where the Kambelpur railway station began. The

gobbled: eaten quickly/greedily **summoned**: sent for/called **virtuous**: good and noble
farishta: angel

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elders had warned me never to cross the railway tracks. Fine. The elders had also warned me that one must never eat sweets with one's fees money. How did this instruction escape my mind that day? I don't know.

Comprehension Check

1. *(i) Why didn't he eat all the* jalebis *he had bought?*
   (ii) What did he do with the remaining jalebis*?*
2. *"The fear was killing me." What was the fear?*
3. *"Children's stomachs are like digestion machines." What do you understand by that? Do you agree?*
4. *How did he plan to pay the fees the next day?*
5. *When it is time to pay the fees, what does he do? How is he disobeying the elders by doing so?*

III

- Remorseful and scared, he prays to God for monetary help.
- He makes matters look normal but prays harder than ever.
- The inevitable happens, though somewhere along the way he notices the divide between the fanciful and the factual.

There was a shade-giving tree beside the railway tracks. I sat under it and wondered whether there could possibly be a more unfortunate child than me in this world! When the coins had first created a racket in my pocket, the entire matter seemed so simple and straightforward. Eat *jalebis* with the fees money and then pay the fees with the scholarship money. I thought that two and two added up to four and could never be five. How was I to know that sometimes it added up to five as well? Had I known that I would get the scholarship the next month, I would have postponed my *jalebi* eating programme to the next month as well. Now for the crime of eating a few *jalebis*, for the first time in my life I was absent from school, and crouching in the shade of a tree in a deserted corner of the railway station. Sitting there under the tree, at first I felt like crying.

racket: uproar/loud noise **crouching**: sitting (as if hiding)

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Then I felt like laughing when it struck me that the tears I was shedding were not tears but drops of *jalebi* syrup. From the *jalebis* my thoughts went to the fees, and from fees to Master Ghulam Mohammed's cane, and from his cane I thought of God. I closed my eyes, and began to pray.

'*Allah miyan*! I'm a very good boy. I have memorised the entire *namaaz*. I even know the last ten *surats* of the Quran by heart. If you wish, I can recite the entire *ayat-al-kursi* for you just now. The need of your devoted servant is only the fees money that I ate the *jalebis* with... So all right, I admit I made a mistake. I didn't eat them all by myself, though I fed them to a whole lot of children too, but yes, it was a mistake. If I'd known the scholarship money would be given next month, I would neither have eaten them nor fed them to the others. Now you do one thing, just put four rupees in my bag. If there's a *paisa* more than four ruppes I will be very displeased with you. I promise, if I ever eat sweets with my fees money again, then let a thief's punishment be my punishment. So, *Allah miyan*, just this once, help me out. There is no shortage of anything in your treasury. Even our *chaprasi* takes a whole lot of money home every month, and *Allahji*, after all I am the nephew of a big officer. Won't you give me just four rupees?

After the prayer I offered *namaaz*, recited ten *surats*, *ayat-al-kursi, kalma-e-tayyab*, in fact everything that I remembered. Then I blew over my bag saying Choo. Then, after saying *bismillah*, I realised that what

surats: verses from the Holy Quran *ayat-al-kursi*: title of a verse in the Holy Quran; treasury: wealth *chaprasi*: peon choo: sound of 'blowing over the bag' (to ward off evil) *bismillah*: in the name of God (words spoken before starting something)

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they said was only too true — no one can erase what fate has decreed. Forget four rupees, there weren't even four *paise* in my bag. Just a few textbooks and notebooks. One pencil. One sharpener. One Id card my *Mamu* had sent me last Id.

I felt like crying as loudly as I could, but then I remembered that school must have ended and the children must be on their way home. Tired and defeated, I got up from there and walked to the *bazaar* and waited for the school bell to ring, so that when the children came out I too would walk home with them as if I had come straight from school.

I didn't even realise that I was standing near the *jalebiwala's* shop. Suddenly, the *halwai* called out, *"Kyon bhai*, shall I weigh a rupee's worth? Don't want *jalebis* today?"

I felt like saying I won't eat your *jalebis* today but, I'd sure like to roast your liver and eat that instead. But I wasn't feeling too well that day, so I simply moved away.

The next day I did the same thing. I got dressed and left home, went up to the school gate and then turned off to the railway station. Under the same tree I sat and began to say the same prayers. I repeatedly pleaded, *Allah miyan*! At least give it to me today. Today is the second day.

Then I said, "All right come, let's play a game. I will go from here to that signal. You secretly place four rupees under this big rock. I will touch the signal and come back. What fun it will be if I pick up the rock and find four rupees underneath! So, are you ready? I am going towards the signal. One-two-three."

I went up to the signal and returned, smiling. But I could not find the courage to pick up the rock. What if the coins were not there? But then, I thought, what if they were?

Finally after saying *bismillah*, when I lifted up the rock, this big hairy worm got up, and curling and twisting wriggled towards me. I screamed and ran away and once again touched the signal. Then,

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crawling on my hands and knees, I reached the tree. I tried my best not to let my eyes stray towards the rock. But as I picked up my bag and was about to leave, I had to look once again at the rock, and do you know what I saw there? I saw Mr Worm coiled on it comfortably, staring at me.

I walked away thinking, tomorrow I will do *wazu*, wear clean clothes and come here. From morning to noon I will keep reading the *namaaz*. If, even after that, *Allah* doesn't give me four rupees, I will be forced to learn how to strike bargains or make deals with Him. After all, if my *Allah* does not give me my four rupees then who will? That day, when I returned home, apparently from school and actually from the railway station, I was caught. The report of my absence had reached home. It's useless to relate what happened after that.

Well, whatever happened, happened. But up to the seventh or eighth standard I kept wondering, if *Allah miyan* had sent me four rupees that day, what harm could it have possibly caused anyone? It was only later that I came to the conclusion that if *Allah miyan* were to provide all for the asking, then man would, even today, be living in nests like vultures and crows and would not have learnt the art of making *jalebis*!

AHMED NADEEM QASMI
(translated from the Urdu
by SUFIYA PATHAN)

wazu: ablution (washing face, hands and feet before praying)

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Comprehension Check

1. *What was the consequence of buying* jalebis *with the fees money?*
2. *His prayer to God is like a lawyer's defence of a bad case. Does he argue his case well? What are the points he makes?*
3. *He offers to play a game with* Allah Miyan. *What is the game?*
4. *Did he get four rupees by playing the game? What did he get to see under the rock?*
5. *If God had granted his wish that day, what harm would it have caused him in later life?*

Exercise

Work in small groups.

1. Select and read sentences that show
   - that the boy is tempted to eat *jalebis*.
   - that he is feeling guilty.
   - that he is justifying a wrong deed.
2. Discuss the following points.
   - Is the boy intelligent? If so, what is the evidence of it?
   - Does his outlook on the *jalebis* episode change after Class VIII? Does he see that episode in a new light?
   - Why are coins made to 'talk' in this story? What purpose does it serve?

Think it Over

- I do not feel obliged to believe that the same God who has endowed us with senses, reason and intellect has intended us to forgo their use and by some other means to give us knowledge which we can attain by them.

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0850CH11

8 Ancient Education System of India

I

- Did you know that India has been the centre of learning since ancient times? How did we come to know about this?
- There are inscriptions on stones and copper, palm leaf records and our scriptures as evidences of the historic origins of learning in India. Today we follow an education system in which learning takes place through syllabus, curricula, textbooks and assessment practices. Have you ever thought what these were like in the past?
- In this feature story, we will give you glimpses of our ancient education system.

INTRODUCTION

You must have heard or read that travellers from various regions having different climates and cultures began to visit parts of India from early times. To them, India was a land of wonder! The fame of Indian culture, wealth, religions, philosophies, art, architecture, as well as its educational practices had spread far and wide. The education system of ancient times was regarded as a source for the knowledge, traditions and practices that guided and encouraged humanity.

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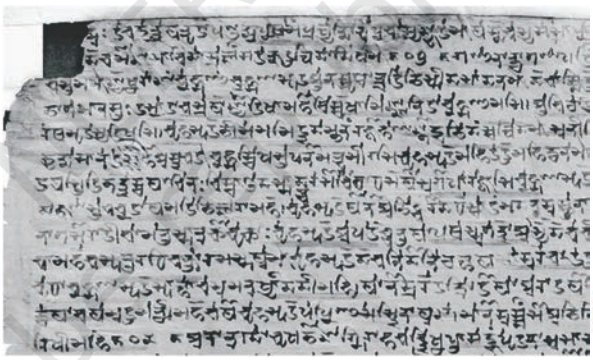
SALIENT FEATURES OF ANCIENT EDUCATION SYSTEM

From the time of *Rigveda* onwards, our ancient education system evolved over the period and focused on the holistic development of the individual by taking care of both the inner and the outer self. The system focused on the moral, physical, spiritual and intellectual aspects of life. It emphasised on values such as humility, truthfulness, discipline, self-reliance and respect for all creations. Students were taught to appreciate the balance between human beings and nature. Teaching and learning followed the tenets of *Vedas* and *Upanishads* fulfilling duties towards self, family and society, thus encompassing all aspects of life. Education system focused both on learning and physical development. In other words, the emphasis was on healthy mind and healthy body. You can see that education in India has a heritage of being pragmatic, achievable and complementary to life.

SOURCES OF EDUCATION

The ancient system of education was the education of the *Vedas, Brahmanas, Upanishads* and *Dharmasutras*. You must have heard the names of Aryabhata, Panini, Katyayana and Patanjali. Their writings and the medical treatises of Charaka and Sushruta were also some of the sources of learning. Distinction was also drawn



A page from a manuscript of the Rigveda*

*This birch bark manuscript of the *Rigveda* was found in Kashmir. About 150 years ago, it was used to prepare one of the earliest printed texts of the *Rigveda*, as well as an English translation. It is now preserved in a library in Pune, Maharashtra. (Class VI, *Our Pasts-1*, NCERT, 2017)

heritage: something that is handed down from the past, as a tradition **tenets**: the main principles of a religion or philosophy

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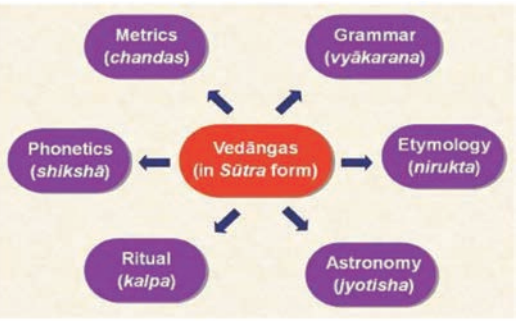
between *Shastras* (learned disciplines) and *Kavyas* (imaginative and creative literature). Sources of learning were drawn from various disciplines such as *Itihas* (history), *Anviksiki* (logic), *Mimamsa* (interpretation) *Shilpashastra* (architecture), *Arthashastra* (polity), *Varta* (agriculture, trade, commerce, animal husbandry) and *Dhanurvidya* (archery).



Visual mapping of the various disciplines encompassed in the Vedas

Physical education too was an important curricular area and pupils participated in *krida* (games, recreational activities), *vyayamaprakara* (exercises), *dhanurvidya* (archery) for acquiring martial skills, and *yogasadhana* (training the mind and body) among others. The *Gurus* and their pupils worked conscientiously together to become proficient in all aspects of learning.

In order to assess pupils' learning, *shastrartha* (learned debates) were organised. Pupils at an advanced stage of learning guided younger pupils. There also existed the system of peer learning, like you have group/peer work.

ANCIENT EDUCATION SYSTEM IN INDIA — A WAY OF LIFE

In ancient India, both formal and informal ways of education system existed. Indigenous education was imparted at home, in temples, *pathshalas, tols, chatuspadis* and *gurukuls*. There were people in homes, villages and temples who guided young children in imbibing pious ways of life. Temples were also the centres of learning and took interest in the promotion of knowledge of our ancient system. Students went to *viharas* and universities for higher knowledge. Teaching was largely oral and students remembered and meditated upon what was taught in the class.

indigenous: originating or occurring naturally in a particular place
Vihara: Buddhist monastery

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Gurukuls, also known as *ashrams*, were the residential places of learning. Many of these were named after the sages. Situated in forests, in serene and peaceful surroundings, hundreds of students used to learn together in *gurukuls*. Women too had access to education during the early Vedic period. Among the prominent women Vedic scholars, we find references to Maitreyi, Viswambhara, Apala, Gargi and Lopamudra, to name a few.

During that period, the *gurus* and their *shishyas* lived together helping each other in day-to-day life. The main objective was to have complete learning, leading a disciplined life and realising one's inner potential. Students lived away from their homes for years together till they achieved their goals. The *gurukul* was also the place where the relationship of the *guru* and *shishya* strengthened with time. While pursuing their education in different disciplines like history, art of debate, law, medicine, etc., the emphasis was not only on the outer dimensions of the discipline but also on enriching inner dimensions of the personality.

Comprehension Check

1. *Why were travellers attracted towards India?*
2. *What were the sources of the ancient education system?*
3. *What were the features of education system in ancient India?*
4. *What was the role of guru in pupils' lives?*

II

- In Part I, you have read about the ancient education system in *ashrams*/*gurukuls*, and the way of life in them.
- This system continued to flourish during the time of the Buddha and the subsequent periods.

Many monasteries/*viharas* were set up for monks and nuns to meditate, debate and discuss with the learned for their quest for knowledge during this period. Around these *viharas,* other educational centres of higher learning developed, which attracted

monastery: a place where monks line and worship

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students from China, Korea, Tibet, Burma, Ceylon, Java, Nepal and other distant countries.

VIHARAS AND UNIVERSITIES

The *Jataka* tales, accounts given by Xuan Zang and I-Qing (Chinese scholars), as well as other sources tell us that kings and society took active interest in promoting education. As a result many famous educational centres came into existence. Among the most notable universities that evolved during this period were situated at Takshashila, Nalanda, Valabhi, Vikramshila, Odantapuri and Jagaddala. These universities developed in connection with the *viharas*. Those at Benaras, Navadeep and Kanchi developed in connection with temples and became centres of community life in the places where they were situated.

These institutions catered to the needs of advanced level students. Such students joined the centres of higher learning and developed their knowledge by mutual discussions and debates with renowned scholars.

Not only this, there was also occasional summoning by a king to a gathering in which the scholars of the country of various *viharas* and universities would meet, debate and exchange their views.

In this section we will give you glimpses of two universities of the ancient period. These universities were considered among the best centres of learning in the world. These have been recently declared heritage sites by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

TAKSHASHILA OR TAXILA

In ancient times, Takshashila was a noted centre of learning, including religious teachings of Buddhism, for several centuries. It continued to attract students from around the world until its destruction in the 5th century CE. It was known for its higher

summon: to officially arrange a meeting of people
university: institution of higher education

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education and the curriculum comprised the study of ancient scriptures, law, medicine, astronomy, military science and the eighteen *silpas* or arts.

Takshashila became famous as a place of learning due to its teachers' expertise. Among its noted pupils were the legendary Indian grammarian, Panini. He was an expert in language and grammar and authored one of the greatest works on grammar called *Ashtadhyayi*. Jivaka, one of the most renowned physicians in ancient India, and Chanakya (also known as Kautilya), a skilled exponent of statecraft, both studied here. Students came to Takshashila from Kashi, Kosala, Magadha and also from other countries in spite of the long and arduous journey they had to undertake.

Postage stamp of Indian grammarian, Panini

Takshashila was an ancient Indian city, which is now in north-western Pakistan. It is an important archaeological site and the UNESCO declared it to be a World Heritage Site in 1980. Its fame rested on the University, where Chanakya is said to have composed his *Arthashastra*.

Archaeologist Alexander Cunningham discovered its ruins in the mid-19th century.

ROLE OF THE TEACHER

Teachers had complete autonomy in all aspects from selection of students to designing their syllabi. When the teacher was satisfied with the performance of the students, the course concluded.

autonomy: freedom to act on one's will **statecraft:** the skill of governing a country

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He would admit as many students as he liked and taught what his students were keen to learn. Debate and discussions were the primary methods of teaching. Teachers were assisted by their advanced level students.

NALANDA UNIVERSITY

Xuan Zang *I-Qing*

Nalanda, when Xuan Zang visited it, was called Nala and was a centre of higher learning in various subjects. The University attracted scholars from the different parts of the country as well as world. The Chinese scholars I-Qing and Xuan Zang visited Nalanda in the 7th century CE. They have given vivid accounts of Nalanda. They have noted that as many as one hundred discourses happened on a daily basis, in a variety of disciplines through the methods of debate and discussions. Xuan Zang himself became a student of Nalanda to study *yogashastra*. He has mentioned that the Chancellor of Nalanda, Shilabhadra, was the highest living authority in yoga. The courses of study offered by Nalanda University covered a wide range, almost the entire circle of knowledge then available. Students at Nalanda studied the *Vedas* and were also trained in fine arts, medicine, mathematics, astronomy, politics and the art of warfare.

The ancient Nalanda was a centre of learning from the 5th century CE to 12th century CE. Located in present day Rajgir, Bihar, India, Nalanda was one of the oldest universities of the world and UNESCO declared the ruins of Nalanda Mahavihara, a world heritage site. The new Nalanda University is envisaged as a centre of inter-civilisational dialogue.

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ROLE OF COMMUNITY

At that time, knowledge was considered sacred and no fee was charged. Contributions towards education were considered the highest form of donation. All members of the society contributed in some form or the other. Financial support came from rich merchants, wealthy parents and society. Besides gifts of buildings, the universities received gifts of land. This form of free education was also prevalent in other ancient universities like Valabhi, Vikramshila and Jagaddala.

At the same time in the south of India, *agraharas* served as centers of learning and teaching. South Indian kingdoms also had other cultural institutions known as *Ghatika* and *Brahmapuri*. A *Ghatika* was a centre of learning including religion and was small in size. An *agrahara* was a bigger institution, a whole settlement of learned Brahmins, with its own powers of government and was maintained by generous donations from the society. Temples, *Mathas*, Jain *Basadis* and Buddhist *Viharas* also existed as other sources of learning during this period.

CONTINUATION OF INDIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

The Indian education system continued in the form of *ashrams*, in temples and as indigenous schools. During the medieval period, *maktabas* and *madrassas* became part of the education system. During the pre-colonial period, indigenous education flourished in India. This was an extension of the formal system that had taken roots earlier. This system was mostly religious and spiritual form of education. *Tols* in Bengal, *pathshalas* in western India, *chatuspadis* in Bihar, and similar schools existed in other parts of India. Local resources via donations supported education. References in texts and memoirs inform that villagers also supported education in southern India.

As we understand, the ancient education system of India focused on the holistic development of the students, both inner and outer self, thus preparing them for life. Education was free and not centralised. Its foundations were laid in the rich cultural traditions

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of India thereby helping in the development of the physical, intellectual, spiritual and artistic aspects of life holistically.

Our present day education system has a lot to learn from the ancient education system of India. Therefore, the stress is being laid on connecting learning to the world outside the school. Today educationists recognise the role and importance of multilingual and multicultural education, thereby connecting the ancient and the traditional knowledge with contemporary learning.

Comprehension Check

1. Where did nuns and monks receive their education?
2. What is Panini known for?
3. Which university did Xuan Zang and I-Qing study at?
4. Which subject did Xuan Zang study in India?
5. How did society help in the education of the students?

Exercise

Discuss the following questions in small groups and write your answers.

1. Which salient features of the ancient education system of India made it globally renowned?
2. Why do you think students from other countries came to India to study at that time?
3. Why is education considered 'a way of life'?
4. What do you understand by holistic education?
6. Why do you think Takshashila and Nalanda have been declared heritage sites?

Think it Over

- Talk to your History teacher and find out more about Takshashila and Nalanda Universities. What could have been the geographical locations of these universities at that time?

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